

THE MASTER OF THE MUSICIANS



A Story of HANDEL'S Days
by *MRS. MARSHALL*



GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL.

From an engraving by Faber after T. Hudson.

THE MASTER OF THE MUSICIANS

*A STORY
OF HANDEL'S DAYS*

BY
EMMA MARSHALL

AUTHOR OF
'THE WHITE KING'S DAUGHTER,' 'UNDER SALISBURY SPIRE,' ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
A. ANSTED

LONDON
SEELEY AND CO. LIMITED
ESSEX STREET, STRAND.

1896

P R E F A C E

I AM indebted to the *Life of George Frederick Handel*, by Victor Schœlcher, and to Mr W. S. Rockstro's biography of the great composer, for the incidents which are introduced in this story.

An attempt has been made to bring the musician prominently forward as the noble benefactor of the Foundling Hospital.

By the performance of the 'Messiah,' and others of his celebrated works, on several occasions, he realised the large sum of ten thousand pounds, which he devoted to the funds of the institution.

When we consider that for some years Handel struggled against the most serious monetary difficulties, we can better appreciate the tender concern for friendless and forsaken children, which prompted him to give this

generous help to the Foundling Hospital. We may take this generosity also as a sign of the really noble and compassionate heart which beat under a somewhat rough exterior, and made him emphatically the friend of the poor and helpless little ones cast adrift in the world.

After the lapse of a century and a half, Handel lives by his music, which is continually sounding in our cathedrals and churches, and appealing to our minds' most sacred aspirations. Let his name also be held in grateful remembrance as the generous friend of the homeless and deserted children, who are still sheltered and cared for in the Foundling Hospital.

It may be hardly necessary to say that Handel spoke in broken English, which I have not attempted to imitate in this story, and that the blind child and those connected with her are wholly imaginary characters.

WOODSIDE, LEIGH WOODS, CLIFTON,

29th September.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. LEFT AT THE FOUNDLING, ...	I
II. A SUPPLIANT, ...	13
III. REBELLION, ...	32
IV. MAY DAY AT THE FOUNDLING, ...	55
V. RELENTLESS, ...	76
VI. CHANGING MOODS, ...	98
VII. A SISTER'S LOVE, ...	121
VIII. DRIFTED AWAY, ...	137
IX. AT ST CRISPIN'S, ...	155
X. THROUGH DARKNESS TO LIGHT, ...	169
XI. IN THE SHADOWS, ...	186
XII. MEMORIES, ...	205
XIII. UNKNOWN, ...	219
XIV. A MEETING, ...	236
XV. HER STORY, ...	252
XVI. MOTHER AND CHILD, ...	271
XVII. THE MUSIC WAKES, ...	283
XVIII. THE SILENT FRIEND, ...	300
XIX. FROM THE VANISHED PAST, ...	315
XX. RENUNCIATION, ...	330

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF G. F. HANDEL, <i>after T. Hudson,</i>	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
		PAGE
THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL,		28
THE FIREWORK MACHINE IN THE GREEN PARK,		72
OLD CARLTON HOUSE,		86
VAUXHALL GARDENS,		112
THE CHAPEL OF THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL,		192
MARYLEBONE GARDENS,		240
HÄNDEL'S HOUSE IN BROOK STREET,		318

THE MASTER OF THE MUSICIANS

CHAPTER I

LEFT AT THE FOUNDLING

1742.—A BITTER north-east wind was driving sheets of half-frozen snow across the deserted thoroughfares in the northern outskirts of London in the early spring of 1742. The evening was closing in, and but few people were abroad, for, except for the flare of the link-boys' torches, the city would soon be wrapped in darkness. It was no easy matter for a stranger to find her way in what was to her an unknown country; and a woman, with a cloak wrapped round her slight figure, with the hood drawn over her head, stopped now and again, uncertain which turn to take.

Presently she accosted a man, well protected from the weather by a cloak of many capes, asking in a low, sweet voice, which betrayed

her, even to the somewhat callous and indifferent observer, to be a lady of quality.

‘Am I near Lamb’s Conduit Field?’

‘A good half-mile yet. What do ye seek there?’

‘The Foundling Hospital.’

‘Ah! You’ve got a hinfant here under your cloak. Give us a look.’

‘No, no,’ she said, shrinking back, and she was hastening on her way when the man, who was a watchman, called after her,—

‘You’ve got to turn to the right, missus, then to the left, and cross the road, and you’ll see the gate right in front. And the basket—’ he added. ‘But I don’t advise you to put the child into it; they be often dead of cold before they are taken out. Hi!’ he said, as he stumped on by her side, ‘slacken your pace a bit, and I’ll bear you company and set you right. It isn’t much out of my beat.’

‘Thank you,’ she said, hurrying on. ‘I think I can find my way now.’

‘Now, don’t ’ee be so ’igh and mighty. There’s many a one has been in the same boat as you find yourself, and no fault of theirs. I’m main sorry for you, my dear.’

In the dim, uncertain light of the closing day, the watchman saw a pair of dark, lustrous eyes turned on him from beneath the shadow of the hood.

‘I do not want your sorrow or your pity,’ she said, in a tone which forbade any further inquiry, and made the watchman give a low whistle, as he said,—

‘Then you sha’n’t have it, my proud madam, and you may take the wrong turning for aught I care. I hope you’ll take it, and find yourself miles away from the ’orspital, and serve you right.’

‘Oh! I have a sore heart,’ she exclaimed aloud. ‘I need not have repulsed that man. He meant well, but I cannot, cannot bear anyone to speak to me of my forlorn condition.’

The baby, nestling against her under the folds of the cloak, gave a little cry.

‘My sweet one, my poor baby,’ she said, as she pressed it to her breast, ‘you will cry in vain very soon, and no mother nigh to comfort you. There is naught else that I can do for you. God knows! I do it for the best.’

She did not take the wrong turning, and, following the directions of the watchman, she reached the outer door of the hospital before the light had quite faded.

There was a bench just outside the porch, and, utterly exhausted, the poor wayfarer sank down on it, and opening the cloak looked down on the face of the child with whom she was about to part.

The baby face upturned to hers was very fair, and, putting up its tiny hand to her mother's face, she gave a soft coo and 'a three-cornered smile of bliss,' which went to her mother's heart.

'Ah! my Pearl, my little Pearl, shall I ever look into thy eyes again? Such eyes! Blue as the sky, and sure with a look of understanding and love unaccustomed at thy tender age. Two months all but four days. I dare not keep thee longer, or they would not take thee in. See, here is thy token tied with the blue riband;' and as the locket set with small precious stones, with a large pearl in the centre, dangled before the baby, she clutched at it and tried to convey it to her mouth, which was her way of showing her approval of the glittering bauble.

The baby was daintily clothed in a blue-and-white linen frock with blue sleeves. A fine holland cap, with a cambric border and ruffle of lace, was tied with a blue riband under the dimpled chin, and an over cape of scarlet cloth edged with fur had a hood of the same material pulled over her head.

'Delay is useless. God will take pity on thee, my pet lamb. But, oh! how can I part from thee? Yet it must be done.'

Then rising, she pulled the bell-rope which hung at the side of the outer door and waited while

the loud clang, clang sounded like a knell in her ears.

The baby started and opened her blue eyes inquiringly.

Her mother covered her face with kisses, and, reassured, the child again began the low, gurgling coo of contentment which is music in a mother's ear.

The door opened, and a porter's voice said,—

‘Have you brought a child?’

‘Yes.’

‘Girl or boy?’

‘A girl.’

‘Pass in.’

The mother did as she was bid, and under the flicker of a dim oil lamp she entered a wide hall.

She was not alone there, and some six or eight babies were lifting up their voices in a variety of cries, shrill and feeble for the most part, though the chorus was dominated by one or two roars, long and loud, which came from the lungs of two infants, who were evidently stronger than the rest.

‘The basket has just been cleared,’ the porter said. ‘You must wait your turn till they are disposed of.’

‘Are they left in the basket without a word from—from their mothers?’

The man nodded.

‘Does it hold so many?’

‘Yonder is two loads,’ was the reply, and as he spoke a man passed with the empty basket, which was fastened by stout rings to chains which suspended it at the outer door.

Two mothers who, like herself, had brought their children to the hospital, now came, one weeping bitterly, from the table where the children were laid for inspection.

The nurses were carrying away the infants, two at a time, towards a door at the further end of the hall.

Suddenly the poor, weeping mother turned, and, throwing up her arms, cried,—

‘No, no, let me take him back, I can’t—I can’t leave him.’

‘Don’t be a fool,’ her companion said; ‘you’ll soon have another, I bet.’

Her face was hard, and her manner defiant. It was easy to see what her past had been.

‘Pass out, pass out,’ the man who had brought in the wayfarer with little Pearl called in a loud, strident voice.

‘Let me kiss him once more—once more,’ the

poor mother cried; but her companion seized her roughly by the arm, and the heavy inner door closed upon them both.

‘Now it’s your turn,’ the man said, touching the woman on the shoulder.

She started, as if it all had been a dreadful dream, and walked up to the table, behind which a man and woman were waiting, and stood there with her child in her arms, like a criminal awaiting sentence.

‘A female child?’

‘Yes!’

‘What is her age?’

‘Seven weeks and four days.’

‘The date of birth?’

‘The first of February.’

The woman held out her arms for the child, and the man said in the same hard, business-like voice,—

‘Give her to the nurse.’

One passionate clasp of the baby form, one kiss on the rounded cheek, and the child was handed across the table to the nurse.

‘She has the required token,’ the nurse said, drawing out the locket attached to the blue ribbon, and, untying the knot which fastened it, she handed it to the man with a significant glance.

He took it, and attaching a label to it, on which he wrote the date of birth and reception at the Foundling, he read it aloud to the poor mother, who stood with folded hands, mute now and calm.

‘Born Feb. 1, 1742; received at the Foundling Hospital, March 19, the same year; aged seven weeks and four days.’

‘You swear this is correct?’ he said, addressing the mother.

‘Yes; I swear it.’

‘Has she been named at baptism?’

‘No!’

‘We will see to that.’

‘Good-evening!’

‘Surely the bitterness of death is passed,’ she murmured, and turning without another look at her child as she lay in the nurse’s arms, she walked down the hall, and went out into the night.

‘That’s a valuable token,’ the nurse said when the mother was gone; and look at her clothes, they are all of fine stuffs, and well made. The lace on the cap is worth a crown a yard, if it’s worth a groat.’

‘Ah!’ the man said, ‘she belongs to the gentle-

folks. I daresay came when she wasn't wanted, like a lot of the others. Bless me, there's the bell again. Tell you what, Mistress Prynne, we shall be as full of babies presently as a hive is full of bees. It is just *pre-posterous* taking of 'em in wholesale like this.'

As he spoke, the basket was being brought in again, with two pinched and half-frozen babies in it, and the same examination was gone through. No questions were asked, because there was no one to question. These forlorn little waifs of humanity were cast upon the charity of the Foundling Hospital, nameless and uncared for, whether they lived or died, apparently of no importance to those who had sent them there.

Once a year, if not oftener, there was an assembly at the hospital of what is called in the records of the institution, 'a fine appearance of persons of quality and distinction at the baptism of the foundlings.'

On the 25th of March 1741, the first ceremony of the kind had taken place, and on the anniversary of the next year, 1742, a similar scene was enacted.

Carriages, with gorgeous hammer-cloths and powdered footmen in attendance, drew up before the door.

The Duke of Bedford was President of the Institution, and he was amongst the first arrivals, with the Duke and Duchess of Richmond and Countess of Pembroke. But the most prominent person in the assembly had neither coronet nor earthly honour to distinguish him.

Modest and simple in his manners and bearing, with no undue sense of his own importance as the originator of this good scheme for providing shelter for homeless and destitute infants, whose very existence was in many instances a shame to their mothers, Captain Coram, now just passed his seventy-fifth birthday, stood to receive the President and Governors, who had entered with zeal into his plans, and had given not only money to promote it, but their personal interest in its success.

The children that had been admitted since the last baptism day were brought in the arms of nurses to the font, and several of the visitors undertook to be their sponsors and give them their names.

It is commonly said, that all babies of a few weeks old are very much alike, and that it is hard to distinguish one from another.

On this occasion one little baby girl attracted the attention of one of the ladies.

‘Let me name that child,’ she said. ‘Give her to me ; she is a lovely baby. What extraordinary eyes !’

‘Yes, my lady,’ the nurse who held her said, ‘she has wonderful eyes.’ Then in a whisper,—‘We think, my lady, she must come of quality—her token is valuable.’

‘Sweet little creature,’ the lady said. ‘Let me see her token.’

The tokens of the children were all kept securely in an iron chest, the key of which was now produced.

The token with the large central pearl—duly labelled with the date of the baby’s admission—and her little garments carefully folded and tied together, with another label with the same date written on it, were now laid before the lady.

She looked at them carefully and sorrowfully, opening the locket and finding there a thick curl of golden hair fastened with two pearls.

Two letters faintly scratched on the inside of the locket seemed to strike her.

‘M. H.—M. H.,’ she repeated. ‘That is surely strange.’ She returned the locket to the nurse, saying, with a sigh,—‘Poor little creature, there is some sad story connected with her. I shall be her sponsor and name her Pearl Sidney. It is one of my names, and it sounds well.’

And then the baby was taken into a pair of tender, compassionate arms and carried to the font, where the service was already begun and a number of names gathered from the past were given to the little foundlings.

Milton and Cromwell, Shakespeare and Tudor, were amongst them, and little Pearl Sidney was remarkable for uttering no cry as the water was hastily poured over her face, and she was received into Christ's Church.

The good old man, Captain Coram, who stood by watching the ceremony, was, like many others, struck by the infantine loveliness of little Pearl.

'You've got the gem of the whole collection, my lady,' he said, 'and you have found a very appropriate name for her.'

'I did not find it,' the lady said; 'it came to her by inheritance. Her token is a locket with a large centre pearl.'

There was no time for more. The babies—some of them crying lustily, others too weak to do more than feebly wail—were borne away by the nurses and after a last kiss on the baby's face, little Pearl was taken from her sponsor, and disappeared with the others through the chapel door.

CHAPTER II

A SUPPLIANT

1750.—IT was an April day in 1750, when the spring sunshine did its best to find an entrance into a house in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square. The hall, with the black - and - white checker-work of the floor, was illuminated by one slanting beam of light, which came from a window above and happened to rest upon the figures of two girls, who, seated on an oak bench, were waiting for an audience with the master of the house.

‘I am dead tired, Charity,’ the elder of the two said, with a yawn. ‘Give it up, dear; he won’t see you. He is in an awful temper. Hark! he is storming now,’ and from the room on the right hand of the hall there came the sound of a loud voice, followed by a violent thud as of something falling. ‘Come, I am quite frightened. Let us go.’

‘No; I mean to wait, if I wait another hour—I

won't be beaten. There's a chariot driving up—a vastly fine one,' Charity said, as the porter in charge of the door opened it half way, nodded, and closed it again. 'No one is coming in, that is one comfort,' Charity said. 'We shall be admitted next.'

'And when you are, what will you say?'

'What shall I say!' the girl exclaimed. 'You know what I shall say. I must hear the "Messiah," and I shall beg Mr Handel to give us tickets.'

'He will send you off quick enough, and think you a forward girl into the bargain.'

'He won't! He has a good heart, if a rough tongue at times. He will listen to me.'

'Well'— with a prolonged yawn—'I hope you are not mistaken, that's all. Oh dear! I wish we had never come. It will end in a scolding from Aunt Prue, and you will cry, and—'

Penrose Treherne's prophecy, as to the evil results of this expedition to Mr Handel's house, was cut short by the irritable clanging of a bell, and the opening of the door just beyond the place where the two girls were seated.

'Mr Jennens's chariot!' bawled the porter, flinging open the hall door, and two servants in livery immediately took up their places on either side, making signs of reverence for their master as

he walked across the hall with slow and stately steps.

He evidently gloried in all the pomp and circumstance of wealth, and had the air of a man who enjoyed impressing those around him with his magnificence.

He bowed low in a gallant fashion to the two gentlewomen who, scarcely knowing why they did so, rose as he passed. There were no traces on his full, round face of the stormy interview he had just had with the great composer, for whom he had compiled the libretto of the 'Messiah'; for Handel resented any sharp criticism of his music by one who had only to concern himself with the words which were adapted to it, and he had just expressed himself on this subject with some heat and vehemence.

But now, when the door closed on Mr Jennens and the sound of the feet of the four horses of his chariot was heard as they went down the street, Charity said to the porter,—

'Can we go in now?'

'You must wait till he sounds the bell. Sit down.'

But Charity was already at the door, and, in defiance of all precedent, she tapped at it.

To her surprise, a voice answered 'Come in,' and

in another moment she found herself in Handel's presence.

A large quarto volume lay on the floor, flung there in the first flush of his anger with the late visitor.

But there was no anger on his face or in his voice now, as Charity approached him with a profound curtsy — her sister following timidly behind.

It must be remembered that Handel spoke in broken English, and never was able to sound the *w* in any word, but always substituted *v*.

'What is it you want to say, eh? I have singers enough, and some of 'em I wish were dumb.'

'I do not want to sing, sir, but I do desire to listen.'

'Listen! Well, what hinders you?'

'Sir, I have no money to pay for my ticket. I came to beg you to grant me leave to be present on May-Day at the Foundling Hospital, when you will open the new organ, your great gift, and the "Messiah" will be performed. Ah, sir, do, I pray you, give me this treat and I will bless you.'

'Tut, tut, child! I tell you that the place will be crammed. There won't be a foothold.'

'Ah, sir! but I am very small; I shall not take much room. See, it is but a little foot,' and she put out a tiny, high-heeled shoe from under the blue

cotton skirt, over which a dainty chintz was looped up through each pocket hole, garnished with bows of red ribbon.

‘Cherry, Cherry,’ her sister said, ‘you are too bold.’

The great master leaned back in his chair, and a smile broke over his face as he surveyed the little petitioner with kindly eyes.

Emboldened by the smile, Cherry drew nearer, and kneeling on the footstool placed before the carved oak chair where Handel sat, she clasped her little hands and said,—

‘Be kind to me, sir. I know you are kind and good, or you would not do so much for the poor little Foundlings.’

Again Handel smiled and said,—

‘But you are not a Foundling child; you are bedecked with ribands and pretty things; you are in no need of charity.’

‘Ah, sir! you do not know; I will tell you. Penrose and I live with Aunt Prue, who hates—yes, hates—anything pretty.’

‘You into the bargain, then?’ Handel said, chuckling.

‘She does not love me,’ Cherry said, with an arch look; ‘she never lets slip the occasion for telling us, Penrose and I, that we owe all to her charity.’

‘And it is the truth, Cherry,’ the elder sister said ;
‘it is the truth.’

‘Maybe it is,’ and the little head, on which rested a small straw hat, garnished with ribands to match those on her dress, was tossed scornfully. ‘Maybe it is, sir,’ she went on, addressing Handel, ‘but I would fain not hear it fifty times, and be told I ought to be wearing a brown stuff frock, and a white bib and a cap, the like of my grandmother’s. Do you understand, sir?’

‘Methinks I do, child; good deeds boasted of lose their value.’

‘Yes, yes,’ Cherry said, clapping her small hands in an ecstasy. ‘Yes, yes, hear Mr Handel, Penrose, and mind what he says.’

The great man, though without wife or child of his own, had always a soft place in his large heart for children. Anyone young and fair like Charity Treherne had an attraction for him.

He rather enjoyed looking down on her from his chair, and watching the varying emotions on her sweet face.

A suppliant like Cherry would not plead in vain.

‘But hearken, little lady. I must know that you have a caretaker if I grant you a pass.

‘Penrose will come with me!’

Handel shook his head.

‘You must have a stronger protector ; there will be a mighty crush and press, and you are too young, both of you, to encounter it alone.’

‘Penrose is twenty, sir, and I am sixteen. I *wish*,’ she said, passionately, ‘I wish I looked older—they all think of me and call me a child. I am not a child. I want to grow old!’

‘Ha! ha! little lady, that want will soon be satisfied. Would to Heaven other wishes were as sure of being granted. But as to this longing of yours to hear the “Messiah,” how comes it about?’

‘I had a friend,’ Cherry said, ‘who sings the music. She had a lovely voice, and when on Sunday evenings she struck the notes on the harpsichord, and sang “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” and “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd,” I was lifted up—up—I scarce know whither, but it was as if Heaven opened.’

Cherry’s face was alight with genuine enthusiasm, and instead, as Penrose feared, the great master would weary of her sister’s rhapsody, he said,—

‘Yes, yes, lifted up, that is true of music ; lifted up, yes—go on, and tell me who this friend was.’

‘Alack, sir, she is gone, and we know not whither. She had dealings for a time with Aunt

Prue, who keeps the shop where gentry come to sell old wares when they want money, and she lodged in the little back chamber. But this gentlewoman would come and sit in the parlour, and, as I tell you, sing Italian songs—songs grand and beautiful, but not, oh! not like the songs from the “Messiah,” and my friend used to say that I ought to hear the choruses, and even she begged Aunt Prue to let me go with her to hear them, and she said I was too young.’

‘That was not the only reason,’ interposed the grave and practical Penrose.

‘Well, Aunt Prue said it was. You need not interrupt me, Penrose. So now,’ Cherry continued, ‘the one desire of my heart is to hear the whole of the grand music when all the hundred voices cry hallelujah, which this gentlewoman said was as if all the angels in Heaven were sounding God’s praise.’

‘Do you sing yourself, child?’ Handel asked, sitting upright and gazing down into the little, upturned face.

‘No, sir, only when I can’t help it for the fulness of my heart.’

‘Sing now,’ he said. ‘Let me hear.’

Then he rose and going to a harpsichord struck a note. Cherry sprang to her feet, and burst forth

—as a bird might—into an air then popular. Her notes were thin, and her voice untrained. The great master knew at once that she would never have power enough to undertake any of the solos in his numerous works. But the spirit of music was in this little, frail body, and he knew it.

‘You are not strong,’ he said. ‘You must not let her strain her organ,’ he said almost sharply to Penrose.

‘No, sir, I do not let Cherry do so. I bid her be content with the violin.’

‘The violin!’ he said, jumping up and seizing one of the many instruments which lay in a variety of cases on a large sideboard. ‘Take this, child, and call music from it. It is next to the human voice, nay, above it, when touched with a skilled hand, which answers the dictates of the spirit.’

‘Ah!’ Cherry said, ‘I can play this a little—a very little. The gentlewoman of whom I spoke left me a violin, and she taught me how to play.’

‘The gentlewoman?’ Handel asked roughly. ‘Give her a name; give her a name.’

Cherry shook her head.

‘Nay, she bid us call her Speranza—that was all. Aunt Prue calls her Madame Hope.’

‘And you know no more of her?’

‘No, sir; nor whither she is gone. She lodged with Aunt Prue for two months and then disappeared, as she had come, all unawares, and that is all I know.’

‘Well, strike up. No, no, the A is flat. Again, again;’ and then there came from the violin a wail of infinite sadness, a sound of yearning and longing which struck an answering chord in the great master’s heart. ‘There,’ he said, ‘that is enough. You have shown me what I wanted to be sure of—that music is a reality to you.’

‘Nay, sir,’ the girl said, ‘nay. It is a vision, an uplifting from this world to another.’

Handel made no rejoinder to this. He turned away as if to replace the violin in its case, but Penrose saw him brush away a tear from his eye.

Presently he sat down at his table covered with books and sheets of music paper, and scrawled hastily on a card,—

‘Admit to the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital, May 1, the bearers of these papers.’

Then he paused, and looking round, asked,—

‘Your names in full?’

‘Penrose and Charity Treherne.’

He wrote the names slowly; they puzzled him;

and when Penrose took the paper and glanced over it, she saw Charity was written Carita ; and Treherne, Tree, with a hyphen, and Hurn.

‘There,’ Handel said, ‘you may go now, but mind you this child has a big soul in her little body ; have a care, you elder sister, or the cage may be too small for the bird, and it will fly away sooner than you think.’

What did he mean? A throb of fear and doubt shot through the elder sister’s heart.

What if Charity should, like a bird, take to herself wings and fly away to that world whither she said music uplifted her? But she put away this thought.

Charity in an ecstasy of delight, hid the precious papers in the pocket at her side, and then going up to the large, burly figure of the great master, said,—

‘You have made me happy, sir, too happy to thank you as I ought.’

Then kissing the tips of her fingers to him, she made her prettiest curtsey and was following Penrose from the room, when,—

‘Hi! wait,’ Handel called. ‘You must not forget what I said of the crowd at the doors of the hospital ; be sure to be well guarded, nor attempt to go unprotected.’

When the two girls were gone, Handel returned to his table and taking the pen began to jot down notes on the lined paper in rapid succession.

Soon he was interrupted by another visitor, who had arrived in a sedan chair, attended by two lackeys, who had set it down in the hall.

The lady was long past her first youth, but was dressed almost as youthfully as little Charity Treherne. Her hair was powdered and her cheeks bright with colour, while a patch here and there gave piquancy to what was still a very attractive personality.

‘Ah! my friend,’ she exclaimed, holding out both hands to Handel. ‘Did I not say to you *les beaux jours reviendront*, and my prophecy is fulfilled. London has awoke from its stupid lethargy and rings with your fame.’

‘My lady, you are welcome as the flowers in May. How long have you been in town?’

‘Can you ask? Was it not my first thought to come to you to add my poor voice to the general acclamations? But Dublin first knew you as you are, first gave you the meed of praise. Do not forget this when all the gentlefolk of London chant your praises.’

‘Forget, forget! nay, my lady. I am scarce likely to forget the generous warmth of the Irish

people, when the English were cold—so cold that they almost compassed my ruin.'

'Ah! let us say no more of those days of barrenness and dearth. To the honour of the Irish be it remembered that when the English were dull and cold they could recognise the greatness of Handel's genius, and were privileged to let the world know of his greatness.'

This high-flown panegyric was absolutely founded on what had really happened. The tide of popular feeling in London, and throughout the country generally, had set in against the great composer.

Disappointed and burdened with debts, sore at heart with failure, when he had in earlier times, patronised by the great Duke of Chandos, been secure of success, Handel had, ten years before the date of this story, gone to Ireland, and in an incredibly short time found himself famous, courted by the Irish nobility and gentry, and admitted to their households on intimate terms. After nine months' absence he returned to London to be no longer neglected, but to accomplish, with the most extraordinary zeal and industry, one great work after another, with a swiftness of production which seems almost incredible. Instead of being chilled by adverse criticism, and roundly abused for attempting to attract an audience to

listen to his oratorios, he became the central figure in the musical world.

On the 27th of November, a year after his return from Ireland, a splendid assembly at St James's Chapel gathered to hear his *Te Deum* and anthem commemorating the victory at Dettingen, preformed in the presence of King George the Second, and so far his triumph was complete.

It was true the fashionable ladies and leaders of what was called *le beau monde* still disliked him. They looked on oratorios, with no scenery and no acting, as vastly dull; many balls and parties for Vauxhall were actually arranged by the leaders of fashion for any night or day when a performance of Mr Handel's works was advertised. But now in 1750 this opposition was for the most part at an end.

The composer's generosity in giving the organ to the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital was now on everyone's lips, and it became the fashion to laud him to the skies, as once it had been the fashion to depreciate him and his work.

Lady King, who was now, after the lapse of some years, come to take up her abode in England, may be forgiven for her exulting pride in the discernment of her countrymen. For the 'Messiah' was performed for the first time in

Dublin, before an audience who were beside themselves with enthusiastic applause.

‘No, dear sir,’ Lady King said, ‘give Ireland her meed of praise, and let it be known that her heart beats with triumph at the success of the great master, whose genius she was so quick to recognise.’

There are few men, perhaps there are no men, who are not susceptible to flattery, and Handel was by no means insensible to the charm of hearing his praises from Lady King’s lips.

How much older she is grown, he thought. Ah! and I am older too, while there can be no doubt my vision is less and less clear.

The sadness of Handel’s face as these thoughts passed through his mind did not escape Lady King’s notice.

‘I am come to cheer you, sir. You must take dinner with me to-morrow, in Great Ormond Street, and go to Vauxhall, where we shall meet fine company. Great things are told me of your Firework music, and I am dying to hear it.’

‘To-morrow at three o’clock, and, till then, adieu.’

‘Nay,’ she said, in her most coaxing tone. ‘Are you not glad to see me? do I bore you? have I interrupted your work? I will go now—so adieu, adieu.’

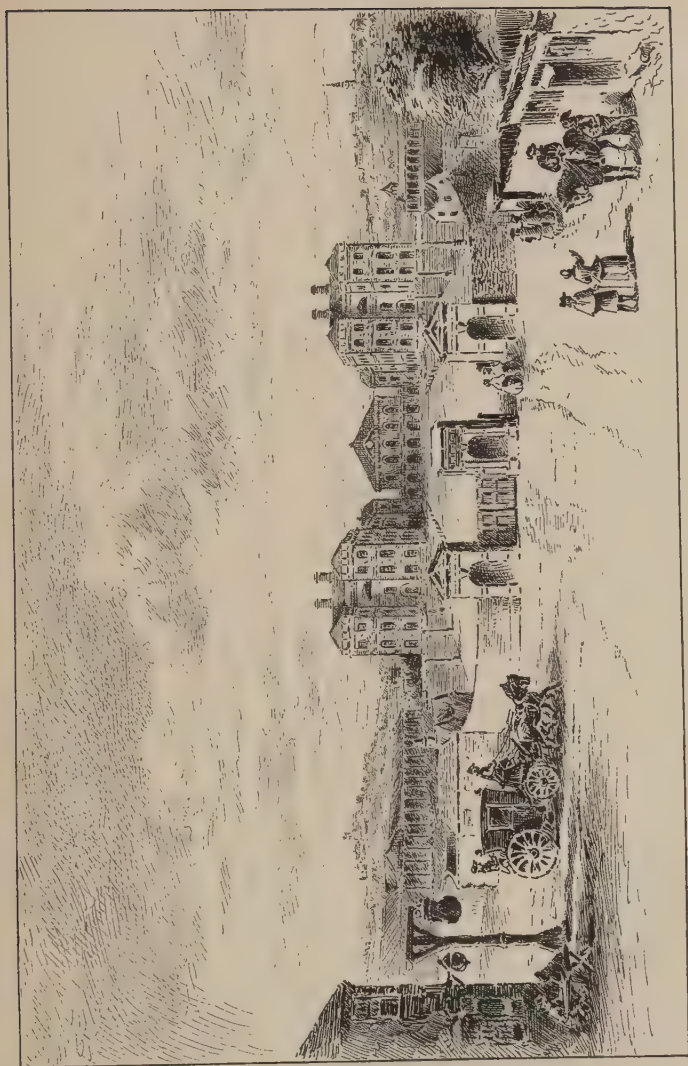
‘I am grateful for the goodness ever extended towards me by your ladyship, and I will have the honour of waiting on you at the time you appoint.’

‘That is well, that is well,’ and then kissing her hand to him, she stepped into her chair, her high head-dress receiving a perilous blow as she did so and her hoop being crushed in.

She was borne away by her two lackeys, and Handel returned to his chair, and took up the pen he had laid down at Lady King’s entrance.

His was a lonely life, lonely in the midst of crowds. No gentle hands ministered to him as old age drew near, no young voices made music in his ear. Perhaps it was a secret yearning, never confessed, for the sweetness and consolations of domestic life that had made him, if rough and often rude to men, ever gentle to women, and inexpressibly tender to children.

It was in May 1749 that the committee of the Foundling Hospital had notice that Mr Handel wished to lay before them a plan whereby he hoped the funds of the hospital would benefit. When he appeared before that worthy assembly of noblemen and city magnates, they rose as one man and, bowing, asked his pleasure, the chairman bidding him take a seat near the head of the table,



THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

and waiting in an attitude of profound attention to hear what he had to propose.

The great man wore a tight-fitting coat of brown cloth, with knee-breeches of the same, and yellow silk stockings. Silver buttons garnished his coat, and silver buckles fastened his breeches at the knees, and the large rosettes on his shoes. His three-cornered hat was removed as he bowed in answer to the chairman's invitation, and displayed his large and somewhat heavy-featured face in the frame of a well-curled wig, which defined the great majestic brow with its outline on the forehead—a striking personality; and when Handel laid down his gold-headed cane with his hat on the table, and, declining the offered seat put one hand in the open breast of his coat, which displayed a frilled shirt where a diamond stud sparkled, there was profound silence in the room as he said in his broken English,—

‘Gentlemen,—I have heard that your funds are so low that the Chapel of this noble institution cannot be completed for lack of money. With your leave, sirs, I will conduct here a musical performance, consisting of select pieces from my oratorio of “Solomon,” and my anthem written to celebrate the Peace of Dettingen, with other pieces which I will write for the occasion. I would ask to

charge half-a-guinea for admission, and it may be this will make a pretty sum.'

'May be! Nay, sir,' the chairman said, 'there is no doubt that this performance will attract a crowd, and we tender you our most hearty thanks, accepting your noble offer and asking you to permit us the honour of enrolling your name as a Governor of this hospital.'

Handel bowed in acquiescence, and said with a smile,—

'There have been times, sir, when my music has not attracted a crowd.'

'Those times are past, sir; those times are past. I pray you, do not refer again to that which all Englishman may well blush to remember.'

This first performance for the friends of the hospital was a marked success. The Prince and Princess of Wales, and, as it is reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that date, a great number of persons of quality and distinction came to the performance. One thousand tickets, at half-a-guinea each, were sold, and from that day Handel was well reckoned a generous benefactor of the charity.

And now, as we know, a more important event drew near. Two years had gone by, and the great composer's fame was well established. The gener-

ous gift of an organ for the chapel he had helped to complete, had been another mark of his interest in the charity, and on May Day of this year, a yet greater triumph was in store for him, for applications for admission were so numerous that many had to be refused, and thus Charity Treherne's heart might well beat with exulting pride that she had obtained a free pass for herself and her sister, by seeking a personal interview.

CHAPTER III

REBELLION

THE shop in Broad Street, Golden Square, where Miss Prudence Treherne carried on her trade in various departments, was small and unobtrusive. But behind the shop a somewhat spacious hall opened out, and a wide oak staircase led from it to a parlour which looked on the street, with a bedroom behind it, whence, in these days of 1750, fields could be seen where cows were pastured, and against the western sky the willows growing by the brook side, waved their drooping branches, and brought a taste of the country to the streets and squares of the neighbourhood.

It is difficult to imagine that at this time, not at any great distance, bowery lanes and copses stretched far and wide—a pleasant district, upon which bricks and mortar and the now endless traffic of Bayswater and Kensington had not encroached.

London had then many a wide area where trees waved in the summer breeze and the air was filled in May with the fragrance of hawthorns and lilacs, and there were meadows where children could gather spring flowers, without a long and weary trudge through countless streets and squares before they could reach them.

The modern modes of locomotion were unknown, and the days of omnibuses pursuing their ceaseless round were not. A hackney coach, if hired by some prosperous and enterprising tradesman to take his wife and children for a ride into the country to tea at some village inn, and partake of curds and whey, or to some cherry orchard or strawberry garden to feast at their own sweet will, for the moderate charge of sixpence a head, was an object of interest and wonder to the whole neighbourhood—of envy, too, to such persons as Miss Prudence Treherne, by whom such extravagances were loudly condemned, and those who indulged in them were commonly said not to know what to do with their money.

Such delights were unknown to Penrose and Charity Treherne; they lived as secluded a life in Broad Street as was possible in the heart of the great city. They had grown up under their aunt's roof, and knew very little, if anything, of what had

happened before they came to take up their abode there.

Miss Prudence had given them as much education as she thought necessary. They had been to a school in Golden Square, where they had learned to read and write and sew and 'cast up accounts.' For the rest, Miss Treherne was responsible, and the two girls were kept strictly on Sunday—to repeat their catechism and read Blair's sermons, and attend one of the dull and dreary services which were then universal in those days of a slumbering church, and the general deadness of religious feeling.

Miss Prudence kept one servant, who might have been young once, but who looked as if such a state of existence was very remote. She not only performed household duties in the way of cooking and sweeping, but she assisted her mistress in the shop with her customers, and knew the contents of the great iron chest, double locked, where many articles brought there by the gentry were in safe keeping.

There were no 'three balls' over Miss Prudence's shop, but there was no doubt that in the little parlour at the back of the hall, where stillness reigned, many transactions were effected and money advanced on 'properties' to be redeemed when convenient to the owner.

Many of such properties lay in the big chest for years without being reclaimed. Others were left by agreement for a certain time, when Miss Prudence was free to bring them to the light of day and offer them over the counter to her customers.

Besides this business, Miss Treherne carried on a heterogeneous trade in ribbons and laces, in buckles and buttons, in lengths of brocade and chintz, which she purchased often from itinerant pedlars who picked up such articles cheap, and sold them dear, to be sold again still dearer by Miss Prudence. But she was strictly honest, and only asked a fair price for her goods, going about her daily work with quiet diligence, and, it must be said, with entire self-satisfaction. Upright and moral, she believed she would get to heaven at last as a reward for her industry and honesty; throwing into the scale her kindness to her two orphan nieces, of which, as Charity had told Mr Handel, they were duly reminded if any little differences arose between them and their aunt.

A change had come over the life in Miss Treherne's house in the winter of the previous year. A gentlewoman had come to entrust to her safe keeping in the iron chest some jewels and fine lace, for which she said she had no immediate want.

After several visits to the shop, she had asked Miss Treherne to receive her as a lodger for a few weeks, which would be a convenience to her, offering at the same time a generous remuneration.

Miss Prudence was doubtful, hesitated, asked for references, and for a full account of her family.

‘These I cannot give you,’ was the reply. ‘You hold property of mine which would reimburse you if I stayed here for years, and I can only stay with you a few weeks. If you must have my name, call me Mistress Hope.’

So as Mistress Hope she came to the house in Broad Street; came and changed the whole current of life for Charity Treherne. Her voice was raised many a time to the feeble notes of an old spinet which stood in the corner of the parlour, and awoke the music slumbering in little Charity’s soul.

The violin was her gift to Cherry, and many were the happy hours she had passed in bringing out from the instrument its mysterious power. There were but few rasping scrapes, and scarcely ever a false note—if feeble, it was always true. It was from Mistress Hope that Charity first knew she was fair to look upon—not by so many words, but by the long, yearning study of her sweet, child-like face, as it was raised

to hers, with its pink-and-white colouring, like that of a shell thrown up on the sand, its deep blue eyes, eyes wherein lay a world of tenderness which was poured forth on the gentlewoman who had come for a short space to live under Miss Treherne's, and then had vanished, meteor like, unto space, leaving a trail of brightness behind.

'Nurture your little sister carefully,' Mistress Hope had said; 'above all things, protect her from any of the idle gallants who come to the shop below,' and Penrose had promised with a strange misgiving at her heart as Mistress Hope added,— 'She is but a frail possession. Her voice betrays that her lungs are weak. Never permit her to strain that voice or raise it except with the free, bird-like notes which are no effort and cannot hurt her.'

Mistress Hope was swift with her needle, and the pretty chintz frock in which Charity had presented herself to the great master had been her gift, with the ribbons and dainty apron and the little Dunstable straw hat perched upon the great, shining rolls of her chestnut hair.

Penrose came in also for a like gift, but her gown was sober lavender with pale grey ribbons, and a hood which was tied demurely under her chin and made her look older than she was. There

was only three years' difference of age between the sisters. Penrose had some vague memory of being brought to Broad Street by a man whose appearance was quite lost to her in the haze of years; but Charity had been only two years old and could remember nothing of that time when, as her Aunt Prudence said, she had, with her sister, been thrown on her hands for food and clothing.

This expedition to Mr Handel's house in Brook Street had long been planned and had been feverishly looked forward to by Charity. She had had some difficulty in making Penrose consent to it, but she had a marvellous power over her sister, whose protecting love was almost maternal in its unselfishness and tenderness. Penrose could speak sharply at times, and perhaps strangers like Mr Handel would never guess how strong the love was which existed between the two sisters; but of its strength there had always been abundant evidence.

When the two girls reached their aunt's house they expected a reprimand, but it did not come. Miss Prudence was too much occupied in disposing of a set of silver buttons and a diamond pin to two gentlemen, who were leaning in an easy attitude against the counter. Miss Prudence

just looked up, and then, frowning, signed to the girls to go through the door into the hall.

Penrose passed through quickly, but Charity stooping, picked up a knot of riband, which had by some means been detached from the hilt of the sword which one of the gentlemen wore at his side.

‘Is this yours, sir?’ Charity asked.

The gentleman turned at once,

‘Yes, surely;’ then gazing rather too earnestly into Charity’s face, with evident admiration, he added, as, making a low bow, he took the riband from her hand, ‘to be henceforth of tenfold value having been touched by your fair fingers. See, he said, ‘let me show my gratitude. Choose, I beg of you, fair mistress, an ornament from this tray of treasures. See! here is a crystal heart pierced with a gold arrow, and a little gold chain attached to it. Let me present it to you. What is the price, Mistress Treherne?’

‘Sir,’ exclaimed Aunt Prudence, ‘the young woman to whom you are speaking is my niece, and can accept nothing from a stranger. Leave the shop instantly, Charity.’

‘Young woman! do you say?’ the young man exclaimed. ‘Fairy queen, or angel, would be more appropriate terms. Permit me to make this

humble acknowledgment of the service she rendered by restoring my knot of riband in which a brilliant is fastened.'

'Tut, tut, Heneage,' said his companion, a man much older and graver in appearance. 'Enough of such nonsense. Come, make your choice of these buttons, or I shall leave you to pay for them.'

Penrose now took Charity's hand, saying,—

'Come, come, Cherrie, do not linger.'

Charity laughed a little silvery laugh, and said, making a curtsy,—

'I thank you for your kind intentions, sir; and wish you good-day.'

'Did you ever see so lovely a face, Stuart,' the younger man said as they walked away together. 'Upon my honour, my heart is pierced with a dart this time.'

'Don't be a fool, Heneage, you will be pierced at Vauxhall this evening in another place, before the former wound has time to heal.'

'It is a marvel to me,' the young man continued, 'how that lovely child can be old P'rue Treherne's niece. I have been at the shop scores of times, but I never set eyes on her before.'

'And had best never set eyes on her again,'

was the rejoinder. 'Have you forgot we are to dine at two o'clock, at my Lady King's, in Great Ormond Street. She bid me bring you with me, and you must be prepared to hear a rhapsody about Mr Handel, and the opening of the organ at the Foundling on May Day, and you will have to buy a ticket — mind that.'

'I may buy a ticket, but I don't care two straws for these oratorios; they are vastly dull and heavy; I am not religious enough to hear them patiently.'

'It may be a little more of what you call religion would not be amiss,' the other man said. 'It strikes me you are spending at a pretty quick pace, and a fortune even as big as yours can't last for ever.'

'No; that is true. But there is time enough to sober down. When I see thirty drawing near I may turn over a new leaf, as my poor mother is fond of saying. Upon my honour, Stuart, I can't forget that child's face—it was angelic.'

'Humph! I have heard you say the same fifty times. A new angel, I warrant, will drive away the memory of this last before you are a week older.'

Lady King was all expectancy for the arrival of her guests. She had planned this dinner almost immediately on her return to London, to beat up

recruits to patronise Mr Handel's oratorio of the 'Messiah,' to be performed on the opening of the organ which he had presented to the Foundling Hospital.

'Generous, noble soul!' she exclaimed, when the somewhat motley assembly had seated themselves at her table to do justice to a very abundant dinner. 'He is my intimate friend, I am proud to say, and I am glad to find that London has at last discovered his greatness. Now, I hope to book at least twenty tickets for May Day performance.'

'Well, I don't know that I vastly care for such a performance,' drawled out one of the fashionable dames, who exceeded Lady King in the amount of powder, patches, and rouge, which were supposed to take twenty off her sixty years, and in reality added them instead. 'I am pledged to Vauxhall on that day, and I should die of fatigue if I undertook to go to the Foundling as well. It is all very well for you young sparks,' she said, hitting Jasper Hencage on the shoulder with her fan. 'You are up to anything, and no doubt you will oblige my Lady King and take a ticket.'

'Yes, yes, he has promised,' Lady King said 'and Sir Godfrey Stuart also—that's a settled matter.'

‘To speak the honest truth,’ said a very much bewigged old gentleman on the right of the hostess, fingering his massive silver snuff-box, and inserting fingers and thumb for a pinch, before he handed it to his next neighbour, ‘to tell the honest truth, my lady, this German fellow is no favourite of mine.’

‘Then, sir,’ said Lady King, bridling, ‘if that’s your opinion, you may keep it to yourself at my table.’

‘Beg thousand pardons, my lady, but I can’t change my mind on that score. Why, his temper is odious; he hit one of the musicians a blow with his fiddle-stick, when they were rehearsing the Firework music, and broke his nose, so they say; and he stormed in his own ugly tongue as well as in ours, that he murders with his hideous accent.’

Lady King was a loyal friend, and rose on the defensive.

‘Is a man, sir, to be condemned and hated, because he happens to have a hot temper? I dare to say your valet catches it if your perruque is out of curl. Let me say there never beat a more generous, noble heart than Mr Handel’s, and so all the world save those eaten up with jealousy must allow. Many poor children will rise up and call him

blessed. So now, sir, you know my mind, and we'll shake hands and be friends.'

The old gentleman took Lady King's remarks very coolly, and bowing, said,—

'What man is there so bold as to contradict Lady King. Certainly not your humble servant, who will now beg leave to drink your ladyship's health in a glass of your excellent Madeira wine.'

The rest of the dinner passed off peaceably, and when the guests withdrew, after a protracted sitting, at four o'clock, Lady King had entered several names to be holders of half-guinea tickets for the first of May in the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital.

Penrose and Charity knew that, to use a common expression, they had not heard the last of the incident in the shop, or their prolonged absence that morning.

Miss Treherne ate the frugal dinner, spread in a small room at the back of the hall, in ominous silence, Karen, the old servant with the boy Tom, keeping watch in the shop. Now and then she gave Charity a searching glance, and when Penrose tried to make conversation, she was met with a short 'yes' or 'no.' All she had to say to her nieces would take too much time at this busy hour of the day, and Miss Prudence, perhaps wisely, reserved her

scolding till the shop was closed, and she had leisure to take her knitting and sit down in the parlour upstairs.

The two girls felt they were in disgrace, and when they had, according to custom, helped Karen to put away the crockery and fold the spotless tablecloth, they went to their parlour upstairs, and Charity, being tired with the expedition of the morning, curled herself up on a high sofa with spindle legs, in which only so small a person could make herself comfortable. The straight-backed chairs and sofas of those days were not conducive to repose; and Charity began to rehearse the events of the morning with her sister.

‘I expect Aunt Prudence won’t allow us to go to the Foundling,’ Penrose said, as she seated herself in the deep window seat, and began to stitch the seam of a skirt with swift fingers.

‘Not go!’ Charity said, starting up. ‘I *will* go. I have the tickets presented me; nothing shall stop me. Not go when the great master himself gave me his order! Oh! that Speranza was here; she would have escorted us. Why did she ever come and wake the music in my heart and make me love her, and then go away, no one knows whither, and make no sign? Life is

changed for me since she came here, and, Penrose,' Charity said, starting up, 'I feel sometimes as if I could not go on here any longer. Imagine growing old, like Aunt Prue, here in this dull, dull house.'

'There might be worse fates,' Penrose said, quietly. 'You are tired, child; go to sleep, and forget everything till it is time to make a dish of tea, and then I will awake you.'

Charity resumed her former position, pillowed her cheek on one little hand, and very soon her gentle breathing told that she was asleep. Penrose looked at her from time to time with a tender, wistful expression in her soft grey eyes. Once a tear dropped on her seam and was hastily brushed away.

'She is but a child,' she murmured, 'only a child; but far too lovely to go about only with me. That young gentleman in the shop looked at her with admiration, and it was her beauty and her innocent pleading which moved Mr Handel to listen to her request. He bid us be careful of the crowd at the hospital; he thought us too young, and one of us too pretty, to venture unprotected. I wish I could think of someone who would take care of us—but which of all the neighbours would care for the music? Master Blake would scorn the

notion ; he is as hard about pleasure as Aunt Prue. It is true, the people around us care for their trade and money-getting, and for naught beside. It is not for myself I care ; it is for Cherry, with all her gifts and genius ; for Mistress Hope said she was touched with genius, and beautiful—how beautiful she is ! What did Master Handel mean when he spoke of her voice being weak and that care must be taken of her ? Mistress Hope hinted the same, but it is all their fancy. Charity is strong enough, and I am not going to heed their croaks.'

At this point of her meditation, Penrose re-threaded her needle and stitched away more vigorously than ever, while Charity slept on, dreaming, it would seem, happy dreams, for her rosy lips parted with a smile.

So the long afternoon passed, and at last Miss Prudence Treherne's steps were heard on the stairs.

Penrose left her seat in the window, and going to a corner cupboard, with glass doors crossed in checkers of wood, took down three delicate china cups and saucers—the cups with no handles—and a tortoise-shell tea-caddy and a small, chased silver teapot.

'Shall I make a dish of tea, Aunt Prue ?'

Miss Prudence replied by putting her hand in

her pocket, and laying a bunch of keys with a jangling sound on the table, but she made no remark.

‘I must go down for the hot water,’ Penrose said, ‘and will you measure out the tea please, Aunt Prue?’

Still grim and silent, Miss Treherne fitted a small key in the lock of the caddy, and taking out the shell-like spoon, carefully measured the tea into one of the cups, and then re-locking the caddy replaced it in the cupboard, and taking her knitting from a basket in the corner, sat down in one of the straight-backed chairs and began to knit.

When Penrose had left the room, Miss Prudence turned sharply round and looked down on Charity wrapped in her happy day dreams.

‘Like her mother — yes,’ she murmured. ‘I never thought of it till to-day. It is time I did think of it, or we shall be in the thick of a trouble before we can look round. Pretty—yes, of course she is pretty, and I must keep a stricter watch over her.’

‘The music! the music!’ Charity exclaimed, starting upright. ‘Oh, Aunt Prue, is that you? I must have been asleep, and I thought I heard voices singing Mr Handel’s chorus.’

‘Well,’ Miss Prudence said sharply, ‘it is time

you woke up,' and as Penrose came back with the small kettle of boiling water which she placed on the hob of the empty grate, she went on clearing her throat with what a poet has called 'a cough preludious.' 'Now look here, both of you girls, I'll have no more gadding about without leave. Where did you go this morning? You are spokeswoman, Penrose, and, moreover, I can trust you to tell the truth.'

'I will tell you,' Cherry said, standing up and facing her aunt. 'I can tell the truth as well as Penrose. We went to Brook Street to see Mr Handel. He has given me an order for the opening of the organ at the Foundling Hospital. Good, generous, noble man!—I love him!'

Miss Prudence seemed unable to find words to express her amazement. Then, addressing Penrose, she said,—

'And *you* aided and encouraged this child to do this bold thing?'

'Yes, Aunt Prudence, I went with Charity, and I am glad I did. Do not be angry. Music is Cherry's delight. Sure you should not keep her back from a treat like this.'

'I *would* keep her back, and, what is more, I *will* do so. If you choose to go to the Foundling Hospital you need not think you can come

here again. I shall wash my hands of you both.'

Penrose was really frightened. She knew her aunt too well to hope she would alter a decision once made.

'Aunt Prue,' she said gently, bidding Charity be silent, who was beginning to protest against such a cruel blow to her hopes, 'Aunt Prue, almost all the great people in the town will be there. If we have someone to take care of us, you *will* let us go. Let Charity go. I will give up my ticket.'

'No. If you go, it is against my order—and you know the consequences. And, miss,' she said, turning upon Cherry, 'let me see no more smiling and ogling of fine gentlemen, as I saw below stairs to-day. It was very improper. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself.'

'I am not one bit ashamed,' Cherry said, with a little laugh. 'I picked up the gentleman's riband, and it would have been odd if he had not thanked me. And I wish I had the crystal heart with the gold dart—it was vastly pretty, and it was a shame to stop me from having it,' Cherry said, pouting.

'Cherry! Cherry!' Penrose remonstrated.

'You may say Cherry! Cherry! all night, Penrose, but I am not to be beaten like this. I shall

go to the Foundling, whether you do or not—and now we need say no more about it.’

‘I know who I have to thank for your bad conduct,’ Miss Prudence said. ‘It all comes from allowing Mistress Hope to stay here, setting you up to scream and scrape that fiddle when you ought to be at some useful employment. I wish she had never set foot in this house. I expect she was no better than she ought to be. I was a fool to be taken in by soft words and coaxing ways. There was something wrong, depend on’t. We never knew where she went nor nought about her, and she just set you up to be disobedient and headstrong, and flattered you till you didn’t know whether you were on your head or your heels—silly, giddy thing that you are!’

‘I do not mind one bit what you say of me, Aunt Prue,’ Charity said, ‘but you shall not—no, you shall not—speak evil of my dear Speranza. She was beautiful and good, and—and’—poor Charity’s voice almost failed her—‘and she gave me the one pleasure of my life—music.’

‘Fiddlesticks!’ was the reply. ‘You don’t know what you are talking of. Music! Do you call scraping on the fiddle music? If you do, I *don’t*. I’d as lieve hear the cats on the roof any night, and the same of your voice—it’s little better than

a squeal. You'd better look out, for your mother died of decline, and you are as like her as two peas in a pod. The Trehernes are a fine old race, and you needn't scoff at 'em. That teapot and those cups and saucers tell their own tale, and the pity of it is that my father ever came to town to set up business, and that *your* father, before he was twenty, should go and court a silly, vain child, who had less sense than you have, which is saying a good deal. The Trehernes could hold their heads up with the best in their own land, but my father, having a store of curiosities picked up, and hearing there was a sale for 'em in town, packed up and off we came, bag and baggage. It killed my poor mother and my sister, a fine girl, a regular Cornish maid, who was born and bred by the sea, and just died as a flower dies when put in a cellar.'

Miss Prudence almost forgot her indignation against Cherry in thus rehearsing the past glories of the Trehernes.

'See here! Aunt Prue,' Penrose said gently, as Miss Treherne ended her long harangue, and held one of the delicate china cups by finger and thumb to her lips. 'See here! if we can find some good person to escort us, may we go to the Foundling on May Day?'

Miss Prudence sipped her tea, making the noise with her lips which was supposed to indicate the excellence of the beverage.

‘You won’t find anyone.’

‘May I try? Please may I try?’

‘You won’t find anybody in these parts such a fool.’

‘There’s young Mrs Blake at the hosier’s.’

‘She and her husband are taken up with visions and rubbish and angels flapping of their wings against the window, wanting a pair of hose, maybe!’ And Miss Prudence laughed scornfully. ‘Mistress Blake isn’t the woman I take her for if she leaves her spoiled brat to gad off to the Foundling. Who’s to pay for her?’

‘If Mrs Blake took care of Cherry, I would stay at home. I’ll ask her; maybe she will be willing.’

‘She’s a baby-faced, poor creature, and James Blake is not the man to let her off so easy. He is master, and a good thing too, only he is worse at spoiling the brat than his wife.’

‘I may ask her?’ Penrose said. ‘Prythee, let me, Aunt Prue.’

‘You may ask fifty times, and get a flea in your ear from James Blake for your pains.’

But with this grudging permission Penrose had

to be content, and as she fetched the bowl of hot water and a fine towel, and wiped the precious cups with the greatest care with her slender fingers, she said to herself,—

‘I’ll go to Mistress Blake first thing to-morrow. She is young; she is not like Aunt Prue, and perhaps she will consent.’

There was no thought in Penrose’s mind about her own disappointment. She, too, longed to hear the great acclamation of the chorus, of which Mistress Hope had spoken, as like listening to the angelic choir. If Cherry had her heart’s desire, what else signified? She could but try, and she wished Cherry would not murmur to herself, ‘I shall go, I shall go, for all the old Aunt Prudes in the world. Speranza called her Aunt Prude, and she was right.’

CHAPTER IV

MAY DAY AT THE FOUNDLING

THERE was great excitement in the Foundling Hospital on May Day 1750.

The girls were all dressed in their best frocks, with spotless white tippets and caps—the caps very much like a small edition of those worn by the Normandy peasants. The boys were subjected to an unusual amount of scrubbing, and their short hair was combed smoothly upon their heads, and their faces shining with the ablutions of soap and water.

Those of the children who had good voices were placed behind the choir collected by Mr Handel and often rehearsed by him personally.

He had competent musicians to assist him, but he conducted himself—not as we are accustomed to see a conductor in these days, at his desk with his baton, but at the organ, which he played him-

self with all the wonderful and delicate shades of expression of which he was master.

The first violin was instructed to keep the time, and in the rehearsals Handel's ear was alive to the least failure or uncertainty, and his vehement temper often burst forth on the culprit.

So with the voices, trebles, altos, tenors and basses were collectively and individually rebuked if there was any fault in tune or time; while woe be to the leaders of the chorus if the attack was feeble and disjointed.

To-day things had gone well in the final rehearsal of some portions of the oratorio, and Handel was about to leave the organ for a few minutes with the performers for refreshment when his ear, quick to hear any sound, asked of one of the people in charge of the girls,—

‘Who is the child whose voice I heard above the rest in the “Hallelujah Chorus”?’

‘There are some fifteen, sir, singing.’

‘I know that well, but there is one above the rest—a clear, flute-like note, while the rest scream.’

Presently a little hand was held up, and a child's voice was heard,—

‘Please, ma'am, it must be Pearl's!’

‘Pearl! Pearl! Let Pearl come to me.’

‘She is nearly blind, sir; please to pardon her

being slow in obeying your summons,' the nurse said, for there was a great shuffling of feet and changing of places, while the girl who had spoken led little Pearl down over the benches of the orchestra to the place where Handel stood.

'Is this the child?' he said, his rough, abrupt manner changing to gentleness, and even tenderness. 'So, poor little one, you can't see, but you can sing. What is wrong with her eyes?' he asked. 'They are blue as the sky, and sure she cannot be quite dark.'

He laid his hand on Pearl's head, quite indifferent to the fact that the high crown of her little cap was crushed in, and that the whole erection being pushed back, the golden rings of her hair came peeping out, and clustered on her fair forehead.

'You love music, child?'

The sweet face turned up to his flushed a delicate pink, and Pearl said, in a low, shy tone,—

'I love to sing your music, sir.'

There was nothing of Cherry Treherne's ecstacy in the child's reply, but the low, sweet voice was earnest in its tone.

'Child,' Handel said, 'you have a gift which, maybe, God gave you instead of sight. Has she always been blind?'

‘We think so, sir,’ was the reply, ‘but her eyes, as you see, are so clear to look at, that, except for the droop of the lids, we did not think she was blind for some time, and she is so quick with her fingers and in hearing.’

‘Do you see aught, little one?’

‘I see light, sir, and sometimes I see shining waters; and when we sing the “Hallelujah Chorus,” I seem to see hosts of angels all in white.’

Handel seemed greatly touched.

‘I have darkness before me,’ he thought. ‘God help me to see light in it if He takes away my eyesight. I must see this little one again,’ he said. ‘God bless her!’ and then Handel joined the impatient governors who had provided a repast to be eaten by the performers while the grand people were crowding into the hall.

It was indeed a crowd. Carriages of the nobility, filled with smart ladies and their beaux; chairs carried by liveried footmen, while a throng of less distinguished persons who had no tickets paid for them at the entrance, and some were turned away discomfited.

In this struggling crowd was one eager face, flushed with determination to get in at all hazards.

‘I shall faint. I can’t do it,’ her companion

exclaimed. 'I wish I'd never come. I was a fool to come. Come back, come back, Charity Treherne.'

'I won't; I vow I won't. I had my ticket given me by the master himself, and I will get in. You can please yourself, Madame Blake.'

'Please myself, indeed! I can't move, I'm fainting, Charity.'

'Look out! look out! you'll be knocked down by the horses,' a constable shouted; and it was only by a miracle that Cherry escaped being knocked down by a pair of bay cobs, driven by a powdered coachman in his cocked hat, while a footman in the same livery was standing on the board behind.

The horses were pulled up, and in a moment a gentleman leaped out of the carriage, and, putting his arm round Charity, elbowed his way through the crowd and placed her within the lobby.

She looked up at her protector, and saw it was the gentleman who had seen her in her aunt's shop a day or two before.

'What have you done, Heneage?' exclaimed a lady who was helped out of the chariot by the footman and another gentleman. 'You have scared me out of my senses. I thought you would be trod to death.'

'I have saved this young gentlewoman, Lady

King, from that fate. Will you take her under your care now?’

Lady King answered rather irritably,—

‘Well, we can’t block the way any longer, so come on. Has the girl a ticket?’

‘I—I have Mr Handel’s own order, madam,’ Charity said, producing the paper.

‘Oh! very well, I can’t read the name, but I see it’s Mr Handel’s writing—push on, Heneage.’

‘I have lost Mrs Blake in the crowd,’ Charity said. ‘What will she do?’

But she spoke to unheeding ears. Heneage was too much intent in pioneering Lady King and Charity through the throng to answer.

‘What barbarians these folks are,’ Lady King murmured. ‘An Irish crowd would be civiler;’ then to a stout lady pushing by her, she said,—‘I’ll be obliged to you, madam, to release the lace of my ruffle which has caught on the ring of your fan.’ The fan was twitched fiercely away and the lace torn, and no apology made. ‘Vile manners!’ Lady King said, ‘and, Heneage, what is become of Stuart?’

‘I can’t tell. Stuart must look after himself.’ Then to Charity,—‘Do not be alarmed, we shall be in the hall in a minute now.’

Poor little Cherry was really much distressed.

She imagined Mrs Blake to be trodden to death in the throng, and that would be a terrible end to the day to which she had looked forward with such eagerness.

But presently to her relief a voice behind in the press was heard to say,—

‘Yes, yes, that is Charity Trcherne. Oh! sir, I thank you for your goodness. I feared I should never see my husband again, and he didn’t give a willing consent to my coming.’

Mr Heneage turned his head and said,—

‘Lady King will be satisfied now you are safe, Stuart.’

‘Ah! Sir Godfrey, did you ever see such a disgraceful fight for places? I vow I shall lodge a complaint in high quarters.’

At last the seats were gained—good seats—in the middle of the chapel, and not too near the gallery for the choruses.

Mistress Blake was put into a bench a little behind the row where Lady King had inserted herself, Mr Heneage putting Cherry next her, and seating himself in the outside place.

‘Sir Godfrey Stuart is to come next me,’ Lady King said. ‘Let the girl go back to the woman who brought her.’

‘Pardon me, your ladyship. We can make no

further move. There has been enough bother already.'

Poor Cherry was conscious that she was not welcome, and she was conscious, too, that her dress had been crumpled in the press, her little dainty hat knocked off, and the shining rolls of her hair pushed out of place. Tears were ready to spring to her eyes, as Lady King, leaning behind her to get at Mr Heneage, said,—

'Who is this girl, do you know?'

Heneage thought within himself that Irish manners were not better than English manners, of which Lady King had complained so loudly.

'Yes,' he said, his young face colouring with vexation, 'yes, my lady. Permit me to make Mistress Treherne known to you.'

'Treherne—that's a Cornish name. Has your father a seat there?'

'No, madam, I have no father.'

Lady King scrutinised Charity with that appraising glance which is so trying. But now there was a procession seen passing up the centre of the chapel, a passage being left between the two blocks of benches, and Handel, escorted by the Governors, walked towards a small door below the orchestra, through which he was to pass to his seat at the organ. As he walked along, the

great assembly rose in token of respect, and Lady King, bowing and kissing her hand, claimed from him the sign of intimate friendship. To her surprise, the great master looked beyond her to the little figure which was nearly hidden by her frills and furbelows, and raising his hand waved it with a beaming smile, which raised Cherry from the depths of humiliation to the pinnacle of triumphant delight.

‘He saw me,’ she whispered. ‘He saw me.’

‘Mr Handel is a great and valued friend of mine, Mistress Treherne. He would find *me* out amongst a thousand.’

Charity plucked up her courage, and, much to Heneage’s amusement, she displayed her crumpled paper again, which in the press had not been taken at the door, and looking up at Lady King, she said,—

‘Mr Handel was glad to see me here. He gave me this with his own hands, and bid me beware of the crowd. He said Penrose, my sister, and I must have a caretaker.’

But there was a hush now, for Handel was seen taking his seat at the organ, and soon the overture was demanding attention.

Charity’s face was a study when the tenor voice was raised and ‘Comfort ye, comfort ye My people,

saith your God,' thrilled that motley audience, where gentle and simple met on a common ground.

'Comfort ye.' Cherry's lips parted, and tears unbidden came to her eyes.

Lady King fanned herself and smelt her vinaigrette, attached with many baubles to her chatelaine. The rattle of the silver chains, and the murmurs of 'Fine, very fine,' were lost on Cherry. From first to last her attention, nay rather the drinking in of the music, which appealed to her innermost soul, never flagged.

It is said that when Handel was writing the music to the words 'He was despised and rejected of men,' he was found with the pen in his hand, sobbing, and the manuscript before him blotted with tears. And surely the earnestness and reality of his feeling as he wrote may account for the power that his music possesses over the hearts of men and women now, a century and a half since it was written. There is a magnetic charm in the outcome of a great genius which no lapse of years can destroy. The music of the 'Messiah' lives and strikes an answering chord in many hearts, and is as the message of good tidings to weary wayfarers ready to faint in the toilsome journey of life. Doubtless there were many in that gay crowd

who were there from any possible motive but appreciation of the work of the great master.

In 1750, as in 1895, fashion holds her sway, and one follows where another leads—always provided that the leader is a person, as they said in those times, ‘of quality,’ still more of royalty.

In the pause between the parts, there was a buzz of conversation, and smart beaux left their seats and came to chatter and pay compliments to the fair ladies of their acquaintance.

Mr Heneage was beckoned by a grand lady in the cross benches to speak to her, and Sir Godfrey Stuart came and leaned over the back of the seat where Charity sat.

‘You are well pleased with the music, Mistress Treherne?’

Charity looked up.

‘It is—oh! so much more beautiful than I ever dreamed, sir.’

‘Such young enthusiasm is pleasant to witness. The time will come to you, as to us all, when so to speak, the bloom is rubbed off the peach, and the keen edge of enjoyment blunted.’

‘I don’t understand you, sir; never, never shall I cease to feel such music as this in my heart.’

‘Ah! Mistress Treherne, I could envy you.’

The two ladies on the other side of Charity now tried to take possession of Sir Godfrey.

‘Hearken, Sir Godfrey,’ Lady King, said. ‘And give my Lady Blennerhasset your opinion of Mr Handel. She will not believe that he is as great as his music.’

‘I see you are mighty offended, my lady,’ Lady Blennerhasset said, ‘but we do hear stories of Mr Handel’s violence and bad language when incensed against his performers. Why, he went near to fling one poor woman out of the window.’

Lady King rose on the defensive with true Irish warmth.

‘Some folks are vastly pleased to find spots in the sun, and tear their neighbours’ characters to pieces. Look at yonder children, and see in them a standing monument of the great master’s goodness. See, now, he is all tenderness to the little child who is stumbling along to her seat.’ Lady King put up her glasses, and said,—‘And a vastly pretty child she is.’ See, he is placing her near him by the organ. For my part, a man who is gentle to little children shows a nobleness and gentleness of nature none can contradict.’

Lady Blennerhasset laughed.

‘It is good fortune to have you for a friend,

my lady. I wish I may count you as such.' Then in an aside. 'Who is that child, Sir Godfrey? She is vastly pretty, but not *comme il faut*, is she?

But Sir Godfrey Stuart drew himself up, and returned to Mrs Blake, who was heartily tired of her partner and made frantic signs to Charity that she wished to go away.

Mr Heneage now returned to his seat by Charity, and said,—

'The gentlewoman who escorted you hither and was lost in the crowd would like to take her leave. Shall I tell her she may do so, for I am sure Lady King will see you to your home, or may I have the honour of doing so?'

'Oh, no, no!' Charity said, the vision of Miss Prudence rising up before her. 'Mrs Blake must stay; she must indeed, sir. Beg her to wait for me.'

But further conversation was now stopped, and from that moment Charity knew nothing, thought of nothing, but the music.

'Speranza's song,' she murmured, once and again. 'If Speranza were only here!'

Other glasses besides Lady King's were directed to the orchestra, and when the great assembly rose to their feet at the last chorus of 'Worthy is the Lamb,' the blind child facing the audience could

be seen singing, with her head raised and her eyes—sightless eyes—upturned as if some vision of glory was discerned above and beyond that gay, unthinking crowd. There was a smile on her lips as the last of the Great Amens died away, and Handel, turning to bow his acknowledgment of the burst of applause which could not be repressed, had the child's hand in his. But those who saw it did not then guess how strong was the bond of sympathy between him and little Pearl.

Even then Handel was forecasting the time, which was nearly coming on him, when he should lose that precious gift of sight—a loss which embraced for him all conceivable hindrances to the production of further compositions, which were floating before him, the new creations of his fertile brain and wonderful genius.

The calm contentment of the blind child's face was a contrast to the excitement upon Charity's. Tears rained down her flushed cheeks, her eyes shining with a feverish light through them, her hands clasped. She was utterly unconscious of Lady King's loud exclamation.

'You must move on, move on! Heneage, go and find the footman; and take this girl to the good woman who brought her. What are you dreaming about, child?' she added sharply.

And now Sir Godfrey Stuart came up.

‘You had best wait here, Lady King, till we can secure your chariot. The crowd and confusion in the lobby are fearful.’

‘Well, be it so; but, Mr Heneage, do as I bid you, and return this young person to the custody of the woman who brought her.’

‘Unfortunately,’ Mr Heneage said, ‘I can’t oblige your ladyship. The good woman, as you are pleased to call her, has vanished. You must let me consign Miss Treherne to your care.’

‘Gone! Is Mrs Blake gone?’ The words roused Charity from her dream of heaven, and brought her down to earth, and to the thought of what would await her in Broad Street from Miss Prudence. ‘I must follow her,’ she said, struggling to leave her place, the passage between the seats, blocked by the streams of people anxious to find themselves outside, and on the way to secure their chairs and chariots.

Mr Heneage tried to prevent her.

‘You must not attempt to go away alone. Nay,’ he said, putting a restraining hand gently on her arm, ‘I cannot permit it.’

But Charity was deaf to all his persuasions.

‘If you knew,’ she said. ‘Oh, sir! if you knew how angry Aunt Prue will be at my losing sight

of Mrs Blake, you would not seek to detain me. I pray you, sir, let me go.'

'If you will do so, I must accompany you,' and drawing Charity's hand within his arm he was forcing his way to the entrance, when Sir Godfrey Stuart stopped him.

'Nay, Heneage, Miss Treherne must ride in Lady King's chariot;' and in a lower voice,—'It will only increase her trouble if you present yourself with her at her aunt's door; remember the crystal heart.'

'As if I cared for the old virago. Come, Miss Charity.'

And now amidst the confusion Lady King saw Mr Handel himself coming towards her. She waved her hand frantically as he made his way to her.

'Return with me, Mr Handel. Dine with me; one of the young gentlemen will give up his place to you in the chariot if needs be. Nay, do not refuse.'

'You are vastly good, madam. I will accept your offer; but,' turning to Charity, he said, 'let this young gentlewoman be of the party.'

'Yes,' Sir Godfrey Stuart said, 'that will be an excellent plan, for Miss Treherne has lost her escort in the crowd, and Heneage and I were discussing how she should reach home.'

Handel's word was law to Lady King. Her manner to Charity changed at once.

'You shall return to dine with us. I ordered dinner to be served at four o'clock, and I vow it is near that hour now.'

But Charity said,—

'I dare not do as you ask, madam. My aunt will be so angry, and Penrose will suffer, for she will scold her instead of me.'

The simplicity with which Charity took for granted that Lady King knew who her aunt and Penrose were, brought a smile to Sir Godfrey's face.

'See here, Mistress Charity, I will do myself the pleasure of calling in Broad Street, and relieve Miss Treherne's anxiety concerning you.'

The smile on Mr Handel's countenance reassured Charity, and in a few minutes she found herself safely in Lady King's chariot, and driving off with Mr Handel, who was greeted with cheers by the crowd.

'What a grand success,' Lady King said; 'you must have made a fortune for the Foundling, sir.'

'I am provoked to hear many were turned away,' was the answer. 'I will therefore repeat the performance in a few days. There was vile management, for ticket-holders were refused

entrance, while others paying at the doors were admitted.' Then suddenly turning to Charity, who sat in a mingled transport of delight at her position, and fear as to what it would bring upon her when she reached home, Mr Handel said, 'Have you heard the Firework music, little mistress?'

'Oh! no, sir.'

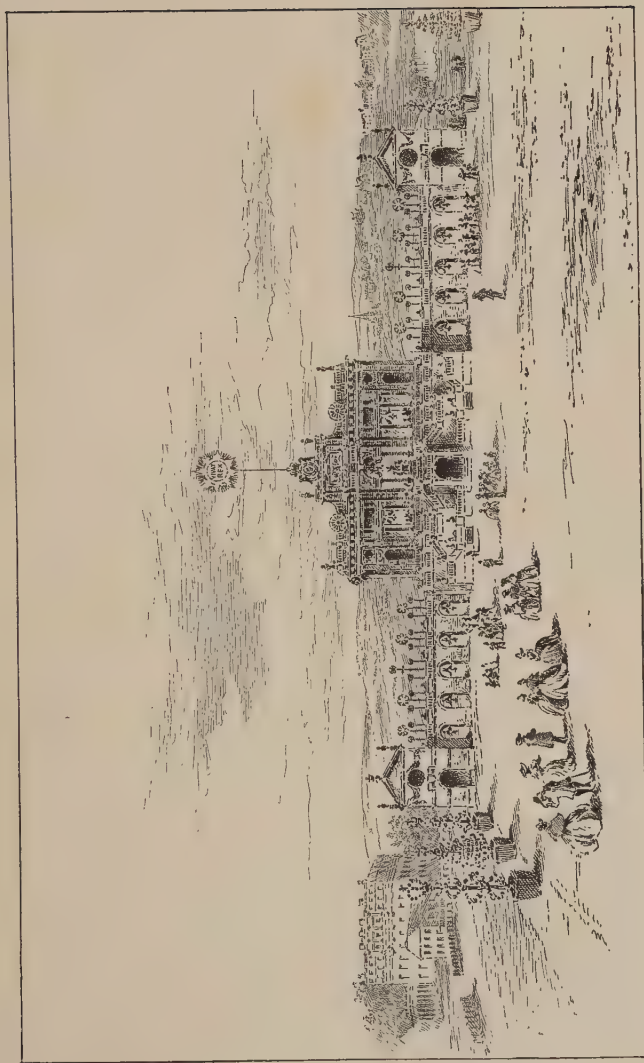
'Then my lady shall let you have a chance on the morrow. It is to be performed at Vauxhall. There will be a mighty crowd, but seats shall be secured for you, my lady, and this young gentlewoman with your friends.'

Lady King hesitated a little; she had not bargained for Charity's company after to-day.

'I am doubtful, sir, if I can bear the heat and crowd, though I am dying to hear the Firework music. I have not yet heard it, though when I read in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the performance in the Green Park, I thought I should have died of fright had I been there.'

'I'll warrant you would have fallen into a swoon, my lady,' Handel said. 'These clumsy English folk so managed that the whole erection caught fire. It was a mercy the King's Library escaped.'

'Yes,' Heneage said, 'it was a mighty fine sight, for I was present and saw the machine blaze out.'



FIREWORKS MACHINE IN THE GREEN PARK.

But your music, sir, was grand, and I, for one, shall be at Vauxhall to-morrow, when I hope to have the honour of Mistress Charity's company.'

'So let it be,' Lady King said, 'if Mr Handel pleases.'

Vauxhall! The very notion of going — *seeing* Vauxhall, was like going to Paradise, in Charity's mind. Surely such a treat could never be in store for her. But Mr Heneage began to descant on the glories of Vauxhall, though he, for his part, was a little tired of them.

'Tired!' Charity repeated; 'did you say tired, sir?'

'Well, yes, you see things don't bear repetition; that is, only a few things. For my part, I could drive in this chariot with—' the young man hesitated.

He was well up in the profuse compliments which the men of these times thought it incumbent on them to offer to women—cut and dried as they were—and seldom more than the chaff which the wind blew away—empty, meaningless flattery, which did as well for a blonde beauty or a dark one, and were careless as to whether the roses on the cheeks, and the lily whiteness of the skin, and the abundance of golden or raven locks were due to nature or art. But as Mr Heneage met the guileless face turned up to him, as Charity asked in surprise,

‘Tired, sir! Did you say tired?’ the words died on his lips.

A young man of reputed fortune, the possessor of a fine estate in Surrey, Jasper Heneage had been going through the usual routine of the fashionable beaux of the time. He had already, at scarcely three-and-twenty, run through a good deal of money by playing high at cards and betting upon the favourite horse at races. A few months before this time he had met Sir Godfrey Stuart, a man much older than himself, who took an interest in the boy, who was, he said, at the mercy of many unprincipled people, and for his own sake and the sake of his mother, who led a retired life in the old manor house of Saint Crispin in the Surrey hills, he had done his best to save him from a career of folly and extravagance, which, if unchecked, could only end in disaster and ruin.

Mrs Heneage had known Sir Godfrey Stuart in earlier and happier days, and he, still unmarried, cherished, for one dear to them both, a love which time seemed powerless to destroy.

Some great sorrow of which the world, ‘all eye and ear,’ had no satisfactory explanation, though at the time all kinds of rumours were afloat, had evidently fallen upon Mrs Heneage. She had appeared at St James, and gone the round of Court

and other gaities with a young daughter whose beauty and graces had won her a place amongst the belles of the day. She was the favourite toast at the clubs, and there were many aspirants for her favour. It was after one season in London that Mrs Heneage retired to her country house, and she and her lovely daughter, Margaret Heneage, were seen in Society no more.

Jasper had squandered money and time at Oxford, and he had been despatched on the grand tour with a tutor and valet, the former letting him please himself, and indifferent to the responsibility of his charge, while the latter connived at many of his young master's escapades, and proved as unworthy of the trust placed in him as the tutor.

On his return, Jasper was launched on the sea of the town life of the day, and fell an easy prey to those who were only too ready to tempt him to idleness and extravagance.

It was not till Mrs Heneage had broken the silence of years and had written to Sir Godfrey Stuart asking him, on the plea of old friendship, to stretch out a helping hand to her son, that he did his best to reclaim Jasper from his gay and careless life.

CHAPTER V

RELENTLESS

SIR GODFREY STUART, faithful to his promise to Charity, went to Miss Treherne's shop in Broad Street, when he had seen Charity ride off in Lady King's chariot. He found only Karen in charge of the shop, and on asking to be allowed to see Miss Treherne, the old servant opened the door leading into the hall, and bid him walk upstairs. As he did so, he heard voices raised in what was evidently a sharp discussion. He tapped with the gold head of his cane at the door, and it was opened by Miss Prudence herself.

'Wanted in the shop,' she began, thinking it was Karen. She started back and asked,—'Your business, sir?'

'Madam,' Sir Godfrey said, 'I crave pardon for intruding, but I bring a message from my Lady King.'

Penrose now came hurriedly forward.

‘Oh, sir, have you news of my sister? We are in trouble about her.’

‘Yes,’ Mrs Blake began, ‘a pretty dance she has led me, and my husband is angry, and Miss Treherne scolding me, and I am near dead with fatigue and fright.’

‘You should have waited, madam, till the performance was over. Mistress Charity—’

‘Don’t name her here, sir,’ Miss Prudence exclaimed, ‘I cast her off. I will have naught to do with her gallivanting off with fine folks; let them take her for good and all.’

‘Oh, Aunt Prue! Aunt Prue!’ Penrose began in distress, ‘Charity is not to blame.’

‘Not to blame! Hold your tongue, Penrose Treherne.’

‘Do hear what this gentleman has to say.’

Sir Godfrey was sorry for Penrose, and bowing courteously to Miss Prudence, he said,—

‘Permit me, madam, to explain how the case stands. Your niece, Mistress Charity, was in danger of being trodden upon in the crowd before the doors of the Foundling Hospital. My friend, Mr Jasper Heneage, seeing her danger, leaped from the chariot in which we were riding with Lady King, and rescued her from her perilous position. I had the honour of doing the same for

this gentlewoman, and after much pressure we got to our seats in the chapel. Unhappily, Mistress Charity was separated from her companion, whom she made several efforts to gain, and, madam,' turning to poor Mrs Blake who was sobbing hysterically, Sir Godfrey said,—'all would have been well had you remained till the close of the performance.'

'I couldn't, I vow, I couldn't. I was near a swoon, and it was no fault of mine.'

Sir Godfrey bowed, and Miss Prudence, thrusting a smelling-bottle under Mrs Blake's nose, bid her 'Stop blubbering like a babe, and be reasonable.'

'You will, I am sure, sec, madam,' Sir Godfrey said to Miss Prudence, 'that there was nothing left for us but to put Mistress Charity under Lady King's care, who has taken her to dine with the great Mr Handel at her town house in Great Ormond Street, and I will see that she is safely escorted here in the evening.'

'You will do no such thing, sir, begging your pardon; the grand people who have taken her may keep her. It was all against my will that she went gadding off to the Foundling. Her sister here knows I forbid it, and her getting Mrs Blake to take her place made it no better. So, sir, take this as my decision—Charity comes here no more. Pack her

goods, Penrose,' Miss Prudence said, turning to Penrose. 'Thank goodness, we'll have no more scraping of the fiddle.'

'Oh, Aunt Prue! Aunt Prue!' Penrose said, 'you surely cannot be so cruel; you cannot part us; I can't live, no, I can't live without Cherry.'

And now the sound of heavy feet was heard on the stairs, and a tall, grave man in a dark-coloured suit with grey knee breeches and stout grey stockings, stood on the threshold of the door.

This was no other than James Blake the hosier, a near neighbour at No. 28 Broad Street, who was even then known beyond the limits of his immediate neighbourhood as the follower of Swedenborg, and his shop was the resort of many of the inquirers into the new religion.

He would scarcely be held in remembrance now, had it not been that his son William has left behind him a name as poet and artist and seer of visions. Nurtured from his earliest infancy in belief that the year of his birth was the date of the New Jerusalem descending upon earth, and his sensitive, imaginative nature worked on by the vagaries of the apostle of a creed which was to upset all former forms of belief, it is no wonder that the child should feel himself surrounded with mysteries, and the familiar friend and companion of angels.

Anyone less likely to be led away by the doctrine of the fanatical Swedenborg, than the grave, self-possessed hosier of Broad Street, it would be difficult to imagine. He now, without any apology, walked up to his weeping wife.

‘Come home,’ he said, ‘and learn obedience.’

‘Oh, James—James—I did not think you would be so angry?’

‘Come home; your boy is crying for you.’ Then turning to poor Penrose, he said,—‘It is you who tempted my weak-hearted wife to disobey me. She knows that I hold oratorios to be profanation of the Word of God, and, by persuading her to yield to your wish, you have been the means of causing trouble, and division between a husband and wife.’

Then forcibly drawing his wife away, James Blake, without another word, left the room.

Sir Godfrey Stuart had been a silent witness of this little episode, and he felt himself placed in a very awkward position. He had great pity for Penrose, who, unable to control herself, was crying bitterly. He went to the chair, over the back of which Penrose had folded her arms and hidden her face on them, her shoulders heaving with her sobs and said,—

‘I will do what I can for your sister, if she remains with Lady King for to-night. Miss

Treherne will relent on the morrow. Do not give up hope.'

'You do not know Aunt Prudence, as I know her; sir, she will never relent.' Miss Prudence had been called down to the shop, and Penrose and Sir Godfrey were left alone. 'You don't know Aunt Prudence. She never, never changes her mind, and it is the harder to bear because she did not really forbid me to ask Mrs Blake to go to the oratorio with Cherry. It is all that silly Mrs Blake's fault. She is more like Mr Blake's spoiled child than his wife.'

'Well,' Sir Godfrey said, 'I will do what I can, and perhaps if I can persuade Lady King to come here and intercede for Mistress Cherry—I hear you call her Cherry, and it is a pretty name, suited to your sister in all her young beauty—anyhow, I will return to-morrow and let you know what plan I think it best to pursue.'

And with this, Sir Godfrey Stuart went down the staircase, and passing through the shop, bid Miss Treherne so courteous a 'Good-evening' that she came from behind the counter, and said,—

'Step into my parlour, sir, for a few minutes, and I will give you my reasons for being strict with Cherry.'

Karen, at a nod from her mistress, took her place

at the counter, and Sir Godfrey Stuart found himself in the little back parlour where the iron chests full of treasures were kept.

Something in Sir Godfrey Stuart inspired most people with confidence, and Miss Treherne was not to prove an exception.

‘You may think me hard and stern, sir, but I have my reasons. Those two girls, my nieces, the children of my poor deluded brother, had a light woman for their mother. The child Charity is her living image, and has all her vain, silly airs and ways. I had her in good order, till unluckily for me, I took in a lodger for a few weeks, who put notions into Charity’s head, gave her this craze for music and trumpery, dressed her in finery and made her vain of her pretty face.’ I was much to blame, I don’t deny it, for suffering Mistress Hope to remain, but she had a soft, coaxing way with her, and I yielded. Who she was, and where she came from, I don’t know; or where she is gone, I know not. I hold property of hers, some jewels and old silver ornaments, and I take it she will return for them some day. She always went about in a cloak and hood drawn over her face, but where she went I don’t know. Mr Blake said she was seen hanging about the Foundling — but it was all hearsay. She wrought mischief enow here, and all this

trouble with Charity comes from her. I trouble you with this, sir, because, while Penrose was taking on and crying out at me, I could not do so, nor do I care to mention their mother before the children. She broke my brother's heart, and he begged me with his dying breath to befriend his orphans—for their mother was as good as dead to them. And I have done it, sir,' Miss Prudence said, 'I have done it, but I will not take Charity back into this house unless she vows to give up this music craze, be obedient, and never set foot out of it without my leave. You can put all this before her, sir. If she chooses to be with grand, gay folks—well, so be it; but, if she does choose it, there's an end of it. She cannot return here.'

'The parting between the sisters would be very painful, madam; the elder seems so deeply attached to the younger.'

'Yes, sir; but as she has aided and abetted Charity in her wild ways, it is only fair she should share the punishment.'

Sir Godfrey Stuart saw no benefit would come from continuing the conversation, and soon after took his leave, promising that Miss Treherne should hear from him on the next day.

As Sir Godfrey Stuart pursued his way to Great

Ormond Street, he thought over the strangeness of his position. Here he was, acting as an ambassador of peace between a shopkeeper and her niece — people of whom he had never heard till the day when he went with Jasper Heneage to haggle over the price of a set of silver buttons and a diamond pin over the counter.

It was then that Charity came upon the scene, and Jasper's susceptible heart was taken by storm. Had he not promised his mother to do his best to guide the young man into safer paths than those he had been treading, and how was he fulfilling that promise by allowing him to be in Charity's society that day?

His leap out of the chariot at the door of the Foundling Hospital had been so sudden, and Charity's danger so great, that he could but admire the swiftness with which Jasper Heneage had rescued her, and he, following as quickly as he could, had protected the fainting Mrs Blake from a like peril.

Sir Godfrey doubted if Jasper's admiration for Charity would last, but if he was mistaken and the young man's erratic affections should be anchored — what then? Would Mrs Heneage think he had fulfilled the trust she reposed in him, if he made a clandestine marriage

with the niece of a tradeswoman, and, as it would appear, the daughter of a man who died broken-hearted from her mother's ill conduct.

'She must go back to her aunt and that good sister of hers. I must insist on her return, and Lady King will support me.'

Sir Godfrey was reckoning without his host. When he reached Great Ormond Street, he found the long-drawn-out dinner, which had been served at four o'clock, was over. The company was in the withdrawing room, and Handel was the centre of attraction. He was seated in a large arm chair, Charity on a low stool at his feet, Lady King and a group of admirers gathered round, listening to his anecdotes of the past and present. Handel, when in the mood, was a very amusing and witty *raconteur*. It is not necessary to write his broken English here, but doubtless it gave a piquancy and zest to his conversation.

Lady King had, when with him, no will but his; and consequently his marked attention to Charity, and his reference to her when he called her 'his little beggar, who came to his house for alms and had not been sent empty away,' had plainly shown Lady King what line to take in treating her.

'And what for did you think she came, the little beggar,' he said,—'gold or silver?'

‘No; better than either,’ Charity exclaimed; ‘more value than either, far, far better, sir.’

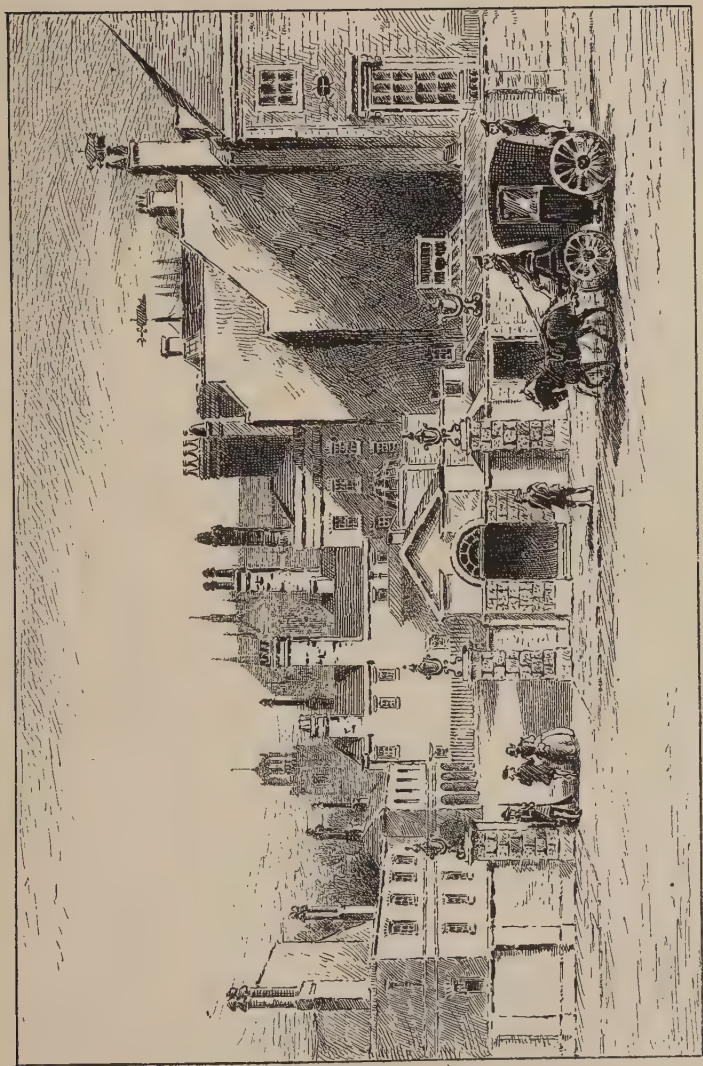
And Jasper Heneage, leaning in a graceful attitude at the back of Handel’s chair, fixed his eyes on Charity’s face, upturned to the great master, flushed as it was with excitement, and looking lovelier than he had ever seen her.

Stories of royalty, from those who are privileged to enter behind the veil which separates the people from the sovereign, are always welcome.

Handel was at this time a great favourite with King George the Second, and Frederick, Prince of Wales. He had been the musical instructor of the Princesses, and by the Princess Anne, who married the Prince of Orange, he was always treated with the utmost friendliness.

Anecdotes of his intimacy with royalty were eagerly listened to, and when Sir Godfrey Stuart entered the room, Lady King held up her hand, as nothing annoyed the great master more than to be interrupted in any of his stories.

‘Yes,’ he was saying, ‘it was at Carlton House that Prince George was seated, listening to me as I played. He was like this little one,’ he went on, pinching Charity’s ear; ‘he could not have enough of my music. He shouted “Bravo! bravo!” and “Encore! encore!” His round blue eyes shone with



OLD CARLTON HOUSE.

delight. I conducted the Concerts often at Carlton House, and I took upon myself on this occasion to say to the Prince's father,—“You will see, sir, that this young Prince will keep up my music when I am gone.” Then he repeated in a changed and mournful tone, ‘When I am gone. Ah, me! that will be soon now.’

‘Hush, hush, sir!’ Lady King said. ‘I pray you do not cast a shadow over this happy evening. Remember genius lives for ever.’

‘Ah! my lady, say, rather, the work lives, but the workman is forgot. Now I have been idle all these hours. I must away and to work, for the dark night cometh when no man can work.’

‘Nay, now, sir,’ Lady King interposed, ‘I would fain away with melancholy. Why will you strike sad chords?’

‘There is no music, my lady, without a minor note, no life without shadows. Well, well, did you see that child I held by the hand in the orchestra? Beautiful as an angel, but blind—blind. She said, poor lamb, she saw light but no form. Blessed even to have light in utter darkness. Ah! my God! what must that be. Order a chair for me, my lady; I must away and work till midnight. Mind you—you are to be at Vauxhall on the morrow, and bring this maiden with

you. The Firework music will please you, little one. Now, adieu ! adieu !'

And Handel rising, the little coterie round his chair broke up, and Charity, awaking from a dream of bliss, saw Sir Godfrey Stuart's grave face near her.

Lady King was engrossed with parting from her guest, seeing him into the chair herself, bidding the lackeys to be careful to convey Mr Handel safely, and insisting on the link-boys preceding the chair, though the May twilight had scarcely faded from the sky. When she returned to her company, it struck her she had forgotten Sir Godfrey's presence.

'Now, Sir Godfrey, I crave pardon. You must grant it, for this reunion with my dear friend, Mr Handel, has chased all other thoughts away. Have you dined, Sir Godfrey ?'

'No !'

'Then you must wait for supper—it will be served at eight—and here is Mr Heneage ready for it, I'll warrant. It puts one out, dining so late as four ; but never mind, we will sit down again with a good heart to do justice to what is set before us.'

There were two other ladies present, one a poor relation of Lady King's, the other an Irish lady who had come over from Ireland with her.

Both these ladies were scrupulously deferential to Lady King, and would never dream of contradicting her. Indeed, Mistress O'Brien, the poor relation, occupied the trying position of 'useful companion,' while Miss O'Connor was a spinster of a certain age, who had gladly accepted Lady King's invitation to accompany her to London, with some vague hope that the suitor might present himself in England, which Ireland had failed to produce.

She was loud in her praises of Mr Handel. He was the dearest of old gentlemen, and such an honour to meet him, and to think he was so intimate with royalty. It almost made Miss O'Connor think she was intimate with royalty herself.

Charity was silent; perhaps her delight in the favour Mr Handel had shown her was too deep for words. Her admiration was not due to the reflected lustre of kings and princes, shed by one who had free access to them, but to the enthusiasm of a young heart awakened by the magic power of music, which gives expression to the yearnings and aspirations lying in the inmost recesses of the soul, and called to life by the divine art which has descended as a strengthening cordial on many a weary one on the journey of life. Charity now awoke from her happy dream, and her real position flashed upon her.

'I must go home, my lady,' she said. 'It is late, and my aunt will be angry, very angry.'

'Oh! we will manage that; a servant shall attend you when you have eaten your supper.'

'I must not stay for supper, my lady.'

'You will have to wait my convenience, miss,' Lady King said sharply. 'The servants are engaged for the next hour.'

'I will have the honour of escorting Mistress Treherne to Broad Street,' Jasper Heneage said.

But Sir Godfrey interrupted him.

'By your ladyship's leave,' he said, addressing Lady King, 'I would ask to be allowed to say a few words to Mistress Treherne.'

'By all means. What is to hinder?'

Sir Godfrey drew Charity aside, and turning to Jasper Heneage, said,—

'My business with Mistress Treherne is between ourselves.'

Jasper bit his lip, and said in a low, angry tone,—

'Are you a candidate for her favour, Stuart? It would be May and December with a vengeance.'

Sir Godfrey only replied, 'Foolish boy,' and as Jasper lounged away, and Lady King was engaged in a somewhat hot altercation with Miss O'Brien or some neglect of duty, Sir Godfrey said,—

‘I saw Miss Prudence Treherne as I promised, Mistress Cherry.’

‘Oh! and what did she say?’

‘That she did not wish you to return to-night. She was offended by your going to the oratorio with Mrs Blake.’

‘Penrose did it. It was Penrose who made Mrs Blake go with me.’

‘I know it, and your sister is in great distress. It is evident to me that your aunt will be slow to relent. I do not despair that she will do so at last, but having said she would not receive you this evening, she will probably lock up earlier than usual, and a scene would follow, attracting the attention of passers-by. I will represent your position to Lady King, and beg her to allow you to remain here for to-night, at anyrate.’

‘But I don’t want to stay. I want Penrose—Penrose will be miserable. Oh, sir! take me home,’ poor Cherry said, clasping her hands in entreaty.

‘Be reasonable, my child,’ Sir Godfrey said. ‘You know your aunt well enough to know that she is not likely to alter her purpose.’

But poor Cherry, always excitable and emotional, lost all her self-control, and weeping bitterly, she prayed Sir Godfrey to let her return home.

‘What is all the noise about?’ Lady King

exclaimed. 'Fie! for shame, Mistress Cherry, crying like a babe!'

'I—I want to go home, my lady, and this gentleman forbids it.'

'And what has this gentlemen to do with it, I pray. I will send you home when a servant is free.'

'Your ladyship may well ask what right Sir Godfrey has to interfere,' Heneage said. 'I will escort Mistress Treherne to her home, and be proud to do so.'

'No, no,' Lady King said, 'that won't do, my fine fellow. I can't trust you to set out with pretty little Mistress Cherry at this time of the evening. No, no, Master Jasper.'

Jasper was breaking out into a hot protest, when Sir Godfrey said quietly,—

'Will your ladyship suffer Mistress Charity Treherne to remain here to-night? She has incurred the displeasure of her aunt, with whom she lives, by going to the Foundling to hear the oratorio.'

'She must be an arrant fool, that aunt,' Lady King said.

'Mistress Cherry, as you know,' Sir Godfrey continued, 'was unfortunately separated from her companion, and this, together with her going to

the Foundling, has so irritated her aunt that she refuses to receive her for the present. May I beg your ladyship to allow her to stay here?' Adding, 'I think Mr Handel would be of my opinion, that his *protégée* must not go through the streets at this hour, with the uncertainty as to her reception when she reached her home.'

Handel's name had the desired effect. Lady King relented, for had not Mr Handel said he had made sure of the whole party appearing at Vauxhall the next evening to hear the Firework music?

'Very good, Sir Godfrey, let the child remain here. O'Brien, she can share your bed, and you can provide her with night gear,' and as Charity began to plead, weeping, to be allowed to go home, Lady King said, — 'Now, now, no more of this. Supper is served. Come now, eat yours like a sensible young woman, and don't mope and fret. Why, bless me! there are many who would jump into your shoes if they had the chance of the best places in the Rotunda at Vauxhall.'

Poor little Cherry, finding her case hopeless, turned from Jasper Heneage, who came and bent over her, whispering words of comfort and assurances that he would die rather than see her distress, and said to Miss O'Brien,—

‘Please take me to bed. I want no supper. I am too, too miserable.’

‘Well, then, be off,’ Lady King said crossly; ‘we have had enough of whimpering. Go to sleep and wake wiser.’

So this was the end of Charity’s happy day. How different an ending from what she had anticipated.

Miss O’Brien was by no means pleased to have her chamber invaded by a stranger, and producing a large nightcap with many flaps and frills, bid Charity tie it over her hair and put on a bedgown.

‘Mind you keep to the edge of the bed. I hope you don’t fidget or snore; I am a light sleeper, and hate disturbances.’

Poor Miss O’Brien, dependent on the bounty of her rich relation, to whom it was policy to be obsequious and subservient, was glad to turn the tables on Charity, not ill-pleased to have it in her power to lord it over another as Lady King lorded it over her. She bid Cherry put the tin extinguisher over the wick of the small oil lamp on the table when she got into bed, and be sure to lie quiet and not crumple the sheets.

Left alone, the poor child’s grief burst forth afresh. She indignantly threw aside the hideous

nightcap, and flinging herself on her knees by the large four-post bed, which was hung with fusty moreen curtains, she cried as if her heart would break.

In all her little troubles with her Aunt Prue, she had always Penrose to comfort her. What was Penrose doing now, but grieving for her? All sorts of schemes to effect her deliverance and return to her aunt's house floated through her brain. What was the use of going to Broad Street if she was refused admittance? A few weeks ago, if anyone had told her that the glories of Vauxhall were possible for her, she would have been in an ecstasy of delight. Now, nothing seemed of any consequence, when banished from her home and separated from Penrose. She forgot how she had chafed against her aunt's strict discipline; how she had inveighed against the dull monotony of her life; how, inspired by Mistress Hope, she had thirsted for the music of the great oratorio, and had determined to hear it.

She had succeeded in her plan. She had sat entranced as song followed song, and chorus followed chorus, till the sublime Hallelujah had been as the crown of all her delight, and, as she had said to the great master himself, 'uplifted her from earth to heaven.'

Then came the pride she had felt in Mr Handel's favour, and then—the cruel fall from the pinnacle of felicity to desolation of heart and vexation of spirit. Soon, however, the cloud which hung over her had a silver lining.

She was young and untried, and she was conscious of a sweet sense of pleasure in thinking of the whispered words of devotion which Jasper Hencage had spoken. She could not be insensible to the admiration for her which every look and action showed, and she went over and over again in thought the security she felt in that surging, boisterous crowd when the feet of prancing horses were within an inch of throwing her down, and Jasper's arm had protected her and borne her to a place of safety.

At last softer feelings gained the victory, and it was with a smile on her tear-stained face that Charity laid her head on the pillow, and, dreaming, lost consciousness of all her trouble, as the sleep of youth came to her with soothing power, and for the time, at least, her longings for Penrose and her ever-ready sympathy were forgotten. She was not sure whether she was asleep or awake when she heard distinctly voices in the room.

'Only a shopkeeper's niece! I don't know what has bewitched folks about her, Lady King is so vastly particular about rank.'

‘Ah! my dear O’Brien,’ was Miss O’Connor’s reply, ‘Mr Handel’s praise would make her ladyship think a Hottentot lovely. As to this child, I call her an insipid, baby-faced child—but there’s no help for it. You’ll have to make the best of her.’

CHAPTER VI

CHANGING MOODS

CHARITY anxiously expected some word from Penrose the next day. She felt utterly desolate, and while Lady King was making her plans for going by a boat to Vauxhall she seemed to be left out in the cold.

It was very different when Mr Handel was present; then she was made of some consequence and told she was welcome to remain in Great Ormond Street. Now she was made of no account, the glories of Vauxhall became less attractive, and her only longing was to get back to Penrose.

Guests who were to form the party to Vauxhall arrived soon after noon, and to none of them was Charity made known. She stood apart in the back drawing-room, by one of the windows, staring out into the long, narrow strip of turf, and hoping

she might hear Penrose coming for her to take her home.

‘As you are here, you needn’t stand idle,’ Miss O’Brien said, ‘when I am nearly worried to death about my lady’s ruffles. The edge of the lace was hitched against a fan yesterday and torn. Can’t you mend it while I see to the lappets of her head-dress? You seem half-asleep, child.’

‘I—I can’t mend lace,’ Charity said. ‘I am not clever with my needle.’

‘What are you clever at, I wonder? Not at making yourself scarce when you aren’t wanted.’

And Miss O’Brien flounced off, leaving Charity smarting under the sense of being treated, by Lady King’s companion, as a servant would not like to be treated.

‘I will not stay!’ she said. ‘Vauxhall—yes, even Mr Handel’s music may be bought too dear. Oh, I wish that kind Sir Godfrey would come, or Mr Handel.’

Presently the door of the large drawing-room was opened, and Charity heard a name announced.

‘Mr Heneage, my lady.’

Then there was a buzz of welcome from Lady King and her friends.

‘And where is Sir Godfrey Stuart? We poor females shall want a beau apiece for Vauxhall.

Here is only Mr Bridges and Colonel Peterson ; we must have Sir Godfrey.'

'He will be here ere long. Your ladyship knows he is generally at my heels,' Jasper Heneage said laughing.

'Ah! you naughty boy, you want looking after ; but these are vastly fine buttons on your coat, a new plum-coloured one, and these are good paste buckles on your shoes. What a thing it is to be a man of fortune, only don't make it spin too fast.'

All this time Mr Heneage was scanning the company in the drawing - room, and, turning, he saw through the large, open doors, which divided it from the smaller room, Charity's little figure at the window. Then, quite heedless of the chorus of admiration, which Miss O'Connor led, as to the beauty of his buttons and buckles, he went into the further room and going up to Charity, said,—

'Mistress Trecherne!' making a low bow, his young face colouring with the real pleasure he felt in seeing her again. 'Why here alone?' he asked —'a modest violet in the shade.'

'Oh!' Charity said, 'I am very very sad, sir. I am not wanted here. I ought not to be here. I am intruding. Will you take me home?'

‘You are to shed lustre on the party to Vauxhall. I will be answerable for your enjoyment there. I will devote myself to you. I will be now and always your humble servant.’

Charity’s face flushed crimson.

‘You are very kind to me, sir; but—but you must attend to the other ladies, not to me. I don’t care about Vauxhall now.’

‘You will care for it when you are there. On a first visit, nay and perhaps on a second, it is like Paradise. I remember well how enchanted I was on my first acquaintance with Vauxhall, but everything loses its charm from repetition, all things pall, save *one* thing. Of such beauty as yours, one could never have enough.’

These high-flown compliments were supposed to be the proper way in those times of addressing women, and Jasper Heneage was only following the fashion of the day. It was all quite new to Charity, and her heart beat quickly and her sensitive, emotional nature was far more deeply touched than Jasper Heneage thought.

He had come to her with these protestations of devotion when she had felt so lonely and sad. A reaction set in, and she began to think that, after all, it would be a pity to miss Vauxhall and the chance of hearing the Firework music, and, per-

haps, best of all, again seeing the great master himself.

The party in the larger room were too much occupied with a new arrival to notice Mr Heneage's absence in the smaller room, for Handel himself had appeared unexpectedly. He was not in a very serene mood, and talked loudly of the ill management as to the tickets for admittance to the seats nearest the orchestra.

'I came to bid you be early, my lady, very early, or you will be in a worse crowd than that of yesterday. Here are my vouchers for your admittance. The night promises to be fair, and there is likely to be an enormous crowd of people, so be early, be early. But where is my little maiden left in your charge? Keep her safe, my lady, under your wing.'

Charity, always impulsive, could not resist springing forward when she heard Handel's voice. And the next moment she had made a low curtsy, saying,—

'Oh, sir, I am longing to get back to Penrose, my sister Penrose.'

'Silly child,' Handel said; but he held out his large hand to Charity, which she took and kissed rapturously.

'Forward minx,' Miss O'Connor whispered.

‘Little upstart,’ rejoined Miss O’Brien.

‘Silly child,’ Mr Handel repeated; ‘you surely know you are well off here, and you can’t want to get back to the old vixen, your aunt. I must away. I am pretty well beside myself with work. Take care of her, my lady, and I will see you to-morrow.’

‘Mistress Treherne knows that I will grant her a welcome under my roof as long as it is your pleasure she should remain, sir, but, I pray you, stay and dine.’

‘No, no, no! I have not a moment to waste; be early at Vauxhall, and send your men forward to secure a boat for your company. Adieu! adieu!’ and then Handel bustled out of the room, Lady King following to see him safely into the carriage waiting at the door.

On her return, Lady King said to Charity,—

‘Your apron is much crumpled, Mistress Treherne, and you must have another kerchief for your bodice. O’Brien, see that Mistress Treherne is fitted out with one of my second best kerchiefs, that with the Mechlin lace will do; and put fresh ruffles in her sleeves, and smoothe out the ribands. Go and do as I bid you without delay.’

Miss O’Brien did not obey her lady’s instruc-

tions very willingly, and made a grimace at Miss O'Connor as she left the room, driving poor little Cherry before her.

'I do not want borrowed goods,' Cherry said. 'Leave me alone, I—I—look well enough.'

'Hoity, toity, miss! do you suppose you are to set up for independence? No, you are to do as you are bid, and, if you follow my advice, you will not be so bold in your manners, ogling young Heneage, and fancying the old gentleman has a special favour for you. Not he; he will swear at you as soon as look at you, if you offend him.'

Charity's heart swelled with injured pride and hatred against Miss O'Brien. But the poor little bird might beat its wings against the bars of the cage; it was a useless attempt. She had to submit, and her only hope seemed to rest on Sir Godfrey Stuart, who had already proved her friend, and in whom she felt a greater security than in Jasper Heneage with all his fine speeches.

The boating party to Vauxhall was one of the principal charms of the expedition, and the silent highway of the Thames was alive with the sound of French horns, and the voices of glee singers, when Lady King and her party arrived at the Temple Stairs about five o'clock. Whitehall Stairs

was the favourite starting point, but it was avoided this afternoon as likely to be crowded with all manner of crafts.

Lady King's servants had preceded her, and two boats were in readiness; the benches covered with rugs and cushions, and everything done to make the embarkation easy. But in spite of all precautions there was much confusion, and Charity, who had never been on the water before, was frightened, and sat in speechless terror as the boat was piloted through the crowd of wherries and other craft, of which it seemed hopeless to get clear.

But the merry music of the French horns went on, and Mr Heneage, who had taken care to be in the same boat with Charity, assured her there was no danger, the watermen were too well accustomed to the crowd on the river when there were gala nights at Vauxhall. After passing Lambeth Palace, Vauxhall Stairs were reached, and here the process of landing was as bewildering as the process of embarking had been. There was a great confusion of tongues, and a rush of hangers on eager to offer their services. They were roughly pushed aside by the servants, and volleys of oaths and angry imprecations followed. Charity got more and more alarmed. Was this

the longed-for pleasure? this the fulfilment of many dreams of the glories of Vauxhall? She wished she was safe in the parlour in Broad Street, waking music from her violin, while Penrose listened and encouraged her attempts with loving interest. Was everything in life to prove a disappointment? She had gained her desire—she had grasped the fruit she had hungered for, and was it to prove but dust and ashes after all?

Mr Heneage never relaxed his care and attention, and at last Charity found herself before a wicket gate which was the entrance to the gardens.

Lady King's voice was now heard.

'I hold tickets to admit myself and my party, from Mr Handel.'

'Pay here, madam, pay here!'

'I tell you I have a free pass.'

'Pay here—a crown each. How many are there?'

Lady King was very indignant; the people were pressing on behind and Charity's little figure was jostled and crushed in spite of Mr Heneage's efforts to protect her.

'Now, madam, pass on, pass on; the gentry are hindered by you from coming forward.'

'Here,' Lady King said; 'pay this impudent man his due, Heneage,' as she threw back her purse to him.

Then the wicket gate opened, and one by one the party entered, counted as they came, and Heneage had laid down three guineas for twelve.

Then Charity felt herself hurried down a darkened passage, and then with a sound of distant and muffled music, the many-lighted enclosure burst upon her view.

‘Oh, this is lovely!’ she exclaimed; ‘this is heavenly!’ for the tall elms and sycamores, still in the early blush of spring beauty, were twinkling with coloured lamps shining through their emerald leaves. Long ranges of alcoves with supper tables laid out, temples and pavilions, all illuminated—the gay dresses of the ladies sparkling with jewels or paste diamonds, head-dresses crowned with feathers nodding in the breeze, gentlemen in every variety of coloured velvet suits and satin waistcoats reaching to the hips, fastened with brilliants—the whole scene was one of enchantment, and Charity forgot everything in the delight she felt. She was separated from the rest of the party, and left entirely to Jasper Heneage.

‘The concert does not commence for an hour yet, Mistress Treherne. Let me show you the beauties of the place. See, we will pass up the grand walk as far as yon statue of Aurora; then we will have a turn in the covered alley,

where we can stroll along leisurely, and talk as we list. We will pass through the grove to the orchestra, and find our places there in due time.'

Charity felt at first nothing but wonder and desire to see all the glories of the place. But at last she said,—

'We should go now to Lady King to secure our seats for the music.'

'Do you tire so soon of my society, sweet Mistress Charity? I should not tire of yours for fifty years.'

'Nay,' Charity said, 'by then I should be too old and grey for anyone to care for; but I want to go to the orchestra now — they—Lady King—will think I am lost.'

Lady King was too much engrossed with her own concerns to miss Cherry at first. Not till she had taken her seat with her bevy of friends, in the excellent places reserved for her by Handel's order, did she call out,—

'O'Brien, where is Mistress Treherne?'

'Indeed, my lady, I cannot tell, but Mr Heneage knows, I daresay.'

'Mr Heneage, Mr Heneage! and where is he? Bless me, what a bother the girl is! For once in my life I feel as cross as two sticks with Mr Handel. Go and seek for Miss Treherne, O'Brien.'

But poor Miss O'Brien was saved what, she whispered to Miss O'Connor, would be as vain as looking for a needle in a tussock of hay by Sir Godfrey Stuart's voice,—

‘I will seek for Mistress Treherne, my lady. This is no crowd for a young gentlewoman to be left to fight her way through alone.’

‘Not alone! As I take it, she has her beau with her, Sir Godfrey, he'll make the most of his opportunity,’ exclaimed the old gentleman who had offended Lady King the day before by venturing to criticise Mr Handel.

Sir Godfrey's brow grew dark. He elbowed his way through the crowd and came upon Jasper Heneage and Charity just beyond the boundary of the open air orchestra.

It was, in 1750, called the ‘rustic music house,’ and was not so imposing as that which replaced it a few years later. But it covered a wide area, and had pavilions below it for the accommodation of supper parties. On a raised dais the organ was placed, and the musicians were ranged in a semi-circle round it. Handel was in his place, about to open the performance.

‘Lady King inquires for you, Mistress Treherne. Let me lead you to your place by her side.’

‘I shall have that honour, Stuart,’ Jasper Heneage

said. 'What do you meddle for? I am here. I am as able to escort Mistress Treherne as you are.'

Sir Godfrey took no notice of this remark, but offering his arm to Cherry, he drew her away towards the centre of the orchestra, and asking Miss O'Connor to make room for her, left her in Lady King's party.

Cherry soon forgot everything when the music began.

The Firework music, written to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, took the people by storm. There was so much variety in it. The allegro of 'La Réjouissance' was so inspiring that the hearers could scarcely keep still from excitement. Then there was the grace of the minuet, which made Cherry beat her little feet in an accompaniment, quite unconcerned at Miss O'Brien's nudges and even pinches on her arm, as she whispered,—

'Keep quiet, child; it's vulgar to beat your feet like that. I say, keep quiet.'

'Yes,' Miss O'Connor said from the other side, 'it's not high breeding to fidget like that; the dear Duchess of Monkstone would be shocked.'

The Duchess of Monkstone was often quoted by Miss O'Connor, though her acquaintance with her Grace was, to say the least of it, limited.

What did little Cherry care for these remarks? If

the music of the oratorio had lifted her out of herself, into a higher and purer atmosphere, the music of the Fireworks stirred all the enthusiasm of her nature for earthly delight. She longed to dance; she longed to clap her hands in an ecstasy. When it was all over, and the company repaired to the pavilion for supper, Cherry was like a different being. Sir Godfrey took good care that she should not again be separated from Lady King's party, and circumvented Jasper Heneage in his efforts to get her again to himself.

Sir Godfrey did not heed Jasper's angry question, repeated several times, as to what he meant by meddling with him. He said quietly,—

‘Take Miss O'Connor in to sup, Heneage, and we will get a table for four. There is one vacant near Lady King's.’

Cherry was radiant and smiling, not altogether unconscious of the many admiring glances directed towards her. She was full of lively banter, and she found, at last, that Vauxhall was all and more than she had dreamed it would be. All her sadness vanished; she forgot to long for Penrose; she forgot the prospect of another night with Miss O'Brien. She was happy in the present, and her happiness was increased, if that were possible, by another kindly greeting from Mr Handel, and the question, as he

passed her to a table where he was entertaining some of the principal musicians,—

‘How did my little maiden like the Firework music, eh?’

‘Ah, sir, do not ask; I can scarce find words enough to tell you.’

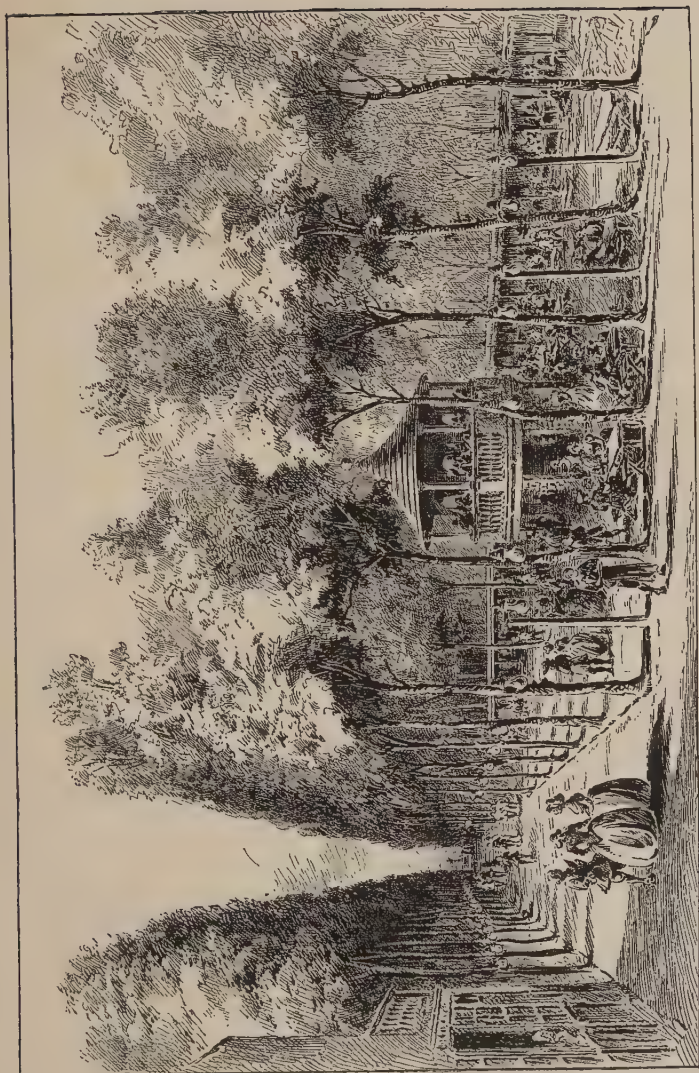
‘Your smile tells me,’ was the reply, and the notice of the great musician brought many questions as to who Cherry could be.

‘One of Mr Handel’s *protégées*, a vastly pretty girl, and so Sir Godfrey thinks, I’ll warrant,’ said an old beau, who thought he was privileged to stare a young beauty out of countenance, and make his remarks on her in a loud voice.

‘Do you think her so lovely, my lord?’ said his companion; ‘there is no style of *le beau monde* about her.’

‘Upon my soul,’ was the reply, ‘the style is good enough for me.’

The company were presently discussing the reports that had been brought of the fearful crowd on London Bridge. There had been a scuffle as the throng of people were on their way to Vauxhall, and some gentlemen were wounded. This news made Lady King say that she should leave the gardens early, before the full tide of departure set in. Hastily rising, she bid her servants make ready, and soon Cherry was



VAUXHALL GARDENS.

threading her way through the gay crowd—Sir Godfrey with Lady King on one arm, and herself on the other; while Jasper Heneage, angry and indignant, had Miss O'Connor and another lady of middle age left to his charge.

It was midnight before the lights had all gone out, and the gardens were left to silence under the deep blue sky of the May night. The brilliant scene had faded like the phantom of a dream, to be renewed again with the same splendour on the following night.

Vauxhall, with its lanthorns and its music, its beaux and belles, frequented by princes and nobles, by the leaders of fashion, and the humbler throng of pleasure-seekers, has been swept away as if it had never been. The scene may shift, but the characters of the actors on the stage are the same. The thirst for amusement and eager chase after pleasure is not yet satisfied. It is, like the old story of the desire to reach the spot where the rainbow touches the earth, vain and fruitless, and yet it is pursued by generation after generation with the same feverish haste and hunger never satisfied.

Poor little Cherry Treherne had, on this first night at Vauxhall, tasted something of the cup of pleasure, and her face flushed with excitement, and her eyes

aflame with the fire burning within, haunted the sober, grave man, who, when he and Jasper Heneage parted from her at the door of Lady King's house, turned sorrowfully away, and laying his hand on Jasper's arm, Sir Godfrey said,—

‘Heneage, take care; you are making that innocent girl, unversed in the ways of the world, think you are in love with her. Take care!’

‘I am in love with her. What I feel for her, I never felt before. Why do you try to come between her and me?’

‘For your mother's sake—if you must have a reason—chiefly, and for your own also. Sure, Jasper, your mother has had sorrow enough without your adding a straw's weight to it.’

‘Has my mother set you as a spy on me? If so, I will go down to Saint Crispin's to-morrow, and have a clear understanding that I am not a babe wanting a go-cart, no, nor a child to be tied to her apron strings. I shall see that divine creature as often as I can; I swear I will.’

‘And what then? Do you mean to marry her?’

Heneage was silent, then, after a pause, he said,—

‘You are so strait-laced, Stuart; I have heard folks call you one of those new-fangled Methodists.’

‘Hearken, Jasper! I shall do my utmost to protect

that poor child from you, unless you give me your word that your intentions are honourable. Be reasonable, Heneage, and face your position. You have already squandered enough of your patrimony by extravagance and dissipation. I want to see you a stay and support to your mother, and not a burden and a grief.'

Jasper Heneage hummed the tune of the minuet in the Fireworks, and Sir Godfrey feared he had made no impression on him. But presently Jasper put his arm through his friend's and said,—

'I will do my best to pull in; and I tell you this, Stuart, sweet, innocent Mistress Cherry, with her heavenly eyes, is more like to help me to do it than anything else. I would not hurt a hair of her head. Here is my hand on it.'

Sir Godfrey hoped for the best, but Jasper's resolutions were, he knew, like the early dew and morning cloud, and prone to vanish under the first burning heat of temptation.

'For his mother's sake,' he said to himself, 'I will yet hope, and keep a watch on him for her sake.'

The clocks had struck one in solemn tones, and the great city was hushed in silence and darkness, when, in the room at Brook Street, where Charity had first seen Mr Handel, the great composer was

pacing up and down. One moment seating himself at his table covered with scores, the next he would go to his harpsichord, or restlessly seizing a violin, he would bring out notes from it such as only a master's hand can bring. His brain was teeming with new melodies. His soul filled with great thoughts which he hungered to express.

Presently he reseated himself at his table, took the pen, and with incredible speed wrote a page of his manuscript, and then throwing the pen down, he buried his face in his hands, and said,—

‘It is coming. I cannot see as once I did. Oh! God, if I am blind, blind, help me, for I shall be helpless.’

In moments like this, with the fear of coming darkness overshadowing him, Handel had many unspoken yearnings after the human love which, as far as we know, had never come near him.

‘Blind! he said aloud. ‘That sweet child is blind; but she has her other senses quickened. She can hear; she can sing; she has the voice of an angel. It may be that I, too, shall have my hearing quickened. Nay, I will not despair; I will not despair. I will work—the melody is coming. The orchestration will follow, and already I seem to hear “Jephtha” perfect, finished.’ Then he took up the pen again and wrote persist-

ently, his voice, still rich and full, giving the melody as he wrote.

Presently pausing again, he went to the harpsichord, and letting his hands fall upon the keys as they listed, he was playing—as he only could play it—the air in the ‘Messiah’ which had filled little Charity’s soul with a longing for rest. The master’s voice rang out in the stillness,—‘Come unto Me and I will give you rest.’

Yes, rest, rest; and he who had made a gallant fight against adversity—who had by his indomitable will achieved success, and won the praise of kings and queens, princes and nobles, found himself so touched by his own music, that tears dimmed his eyes, and for the time the one thing to be desired seemed that rest which is promised to the heavy laden, if they with a whole heart respond to the invitation, and, seeking Him, find rest to their souls.

The last notes had scarcely died away, when a tap at his door made him start up.

It was opened, and an old woman, attired in a cloak with many capes, and a huge night-cap, appeared.

‘Sir, do you know it is near two o’clock? You ought to be a-bed.’

Then the whole mood of the man changed. He was furious at the interruption.

‘How dare you come hither!’ he said, ‘you old fool. Am I to go a-bed at your bidding?’

The housekeeper, who had followed his fortunes for many years, and was well accustomed to his moods, said,—

‘The physician told me you were just bringing on blindness by writing at nights. I do my duty, and I say you ought to be a-bed.’

‘And I say I will sit up till daybreak if I choose. Be off, be off, you old hag! I hate the sight of you!’

It was curious to notice how entirely unmoved the old woman was by the storm she had raised. She knew her master too well to be disturbed by the volley of abuse he poured forth on her. She busied herself without saying another word, in picking up the loose papers lying on the floor. Then she extinguished one of the lamps, and going to the windows inspected the fastenings to see if they were secure.

Handel had seated himself in his chair again; his passion had exhausted itself. By the time his housekeeper had tidied the room, closed the harpsichord, and put the violin in the case, the re-action had come.

‘Give me my hand-lamp, Tabitha,’ he said; ‘extinguish the other, and—and take a night-cap

of hot spirits to my chamber. I'll be there ere the clock strikes two. And, Tabitha, hearken: I was in a rage with you, now I am in a rage with myself. See, I crave your pardon.'

'Granted, sir,' the old woman said.

She had not lived with Handel for some years without knowing how these bursts of temper were as short as they were fierce. She dreaded the threatened blindness for her master perhaps more than he dreaded it for himself. She had been told by the blind musician, Stanley, that the loss of sight had been but little hindrance to him in his profession, and that she need not make such an ado, even if Handel was to be blind. But old Tabitha knew that Stanley, having lost his sight at two years old, was in a different position from her master. An old man deprived of the blessing of sight could not get accustomed to the loss, nor school himself to do without it; he would sink under the affliction. But Tabitha after all had not taken the true measure of her master's powers, nor could she foresee that, as the darkness gathered round him, he would gain an added strength to bear the privation, and be greater in his blindness than he had been when his eyes were as keen for sight as his ears for sound. Nor, when she had left him with the dim light

of the little lamp, while she went to prepare the hot cup of spirits, which he generally took before laying his head on the pillow, did the faithful old woman guess how, with clasped hands and accents of distress, her master had murmured,—

‘Alack! alack! would that I could take His yoke upon me and learn of Him. I am an irascible old man, venting my rage on a poor, good old woman who serves me well. Yes, yes, if I would find rest, I must take His yoke upon me, and learn of Him. Is it too late, too late?’

And a voice seemed to whisper,—‘It is never too late to go to Him and find rest.’ And, subdued and gentle, Handel sought his chamber, bidding old Tabitha a kindly good-night with pleasant dreams till the morning.

CHAPTER VII

A SISTER'S LOVE

WHILE Charity was in alternate moods of excited pleasure and distress at her position in Lady King's household, Penrose was enduring all the misery of separation, without any alleviation.

Miss Prudence remained firm, priding herself on her resolution that she would not receive Charity into her house unless she consented to the restrictions which she should think fit to insist upon, as to her future conduct.

In vain Penrose pleaded, in vain she represented that Charity was too young to be left amongst strangers.

‘So young, scarce seventeen, Aunt Prue.’

‘Old enough to know better,’ Miss Prudence said; then, closing her lips in a firm, straight line, when she spoke again it was to bid Penrose get the leather and rub up two chased-silver mugs which had been committed to her care that morning.

‘I must see Cherry, Aunt Prue; I must find out

if she is happy. She is all I have to love in the world; let me go to her, let me at least see her. She may be pining for me; she may be unhappy. It is now three days since she went; she must need her clothes and—'

'Did I not tell you to pack her baggage and send it after her? Tom can put it on the truck and take it to Great Ormond Street.'

'But, Aunt Prudence, Charity may not be wanted where she is, and she may be willing to come home. At least let me go and find out; I will tell her what you say. She may consent to keep your rules; she may—'

'Hearken to me, Penrose Treherne, that sister of yours will never keep my rules. She is too flighty and self-willed. As we sow, so we shall reap, and if her present quarters are not to her taste, well, she has only herself to thank. If she comes to any harm, it's her fault, not mine. I wash my hands of her.'

'Oh, Aunt Prue,' Penrose cried, 'you are hard, you are cruel. Cherry is the sweetest and dearest child; she only wants love and forbearance, and you have given her neither.'

'None of your impudence, Penrose, if you please, and I'll be obliged to you not to teach your betters their duty.'

‘I didn’t mean to affront you, Aunt Prue, but my heart is so sore about Cherry. May I go and find out how she is? At least grant me this favour.’

‘You can’t gallivant about the streets alone.’

‘But if I get a companion? Oh! I *must* see Cherry.’

Just as before, when Penrose was pleading for her sister, that she might go to the Foundling, if a companion older than herself could be found, she took Miss Prudence’s silence to mean consent, and again turned over in her mind whom she could enlist in her service.

Then suddenly it struck her that she did not even know the number of the house in Great Ormond Street where Lady King lived. Yet she could knock and ring at every house till she came to the right one. At all costs, she must see Cherry, learn from her own lips whether she was happy or sad, whether she would come back and conform to Aunt Prue’s rules, or whether she would still set her wishes at defiance.

The love of an elder sister for a younger one, when it is like Penrose Treherne’s for Charity, is one of the strongest affections that can be felt. Penrose, though still not one-and-twenty, had a half-maternal, half-sisterly love for Cherry. She admired her in her fresh young loveliness as a mother might admire a daughter. No touch of

jealousy ever clouded Penrose's unselfish love for her sister.

She had been so proud of her musical gift which the mysterious Speranza had called forth. She saw with exultation how the great Mr Handel had responded to Cherry's appeal, how his face had beamed on her when she awoke a strain of music from the violin, and she had heard, with a thrill of anxious foreboding, his injunctions not to let that pure young voice be strained, for, sweet as it was, it had no inherent power, and told of weakness in her lungs. All this had happened only a week ago; three days of separation had followed, and they seemed to Penrose like years. Had they seemed the same to Cherry, or was she happy with grand folks, and did not care to come back to her? Penrose had cried herself to sleep every night, and as the days went by, the hungry longing she had for her sister grew more intense.

Penrose, though with none of her sister's brilliant beauty, was very pleasant to look upon. Hers was the face of a Madonna in one of the old Italian pictures. Her hair was parted on her forehead, and dark pencilled eyebrows arched above a pair of calm, hazel eyes; for the rest her features were homely, and her complexion pale and colourless. She had no accessories of dress or ornament to set her off, and her plain, grey, homespun gown, with

a bodice covered with a muslin handkerchief, confined at the waist by a belt of the same material as her gown, was Quaker-like in its simplicity. Mrs Hope had tried to smarten her with ribands and lace as she had done for Cherry, but all her finery had been carefully put away for Cherry's use when she wanted it, and already had been used to vary Cherry's attire.

Penrose had got through her duties for her aunt, and had burnished the old silver mugs till she could see her face reflected in them, and was about to get her cloak and little Dunstable straw bonnet, tied under her chin with blue ribands when Karen's heavy step was heard on the stairs, and the old servant appeared with a note in her hand.

'A livery servant brought it,' Karen said, 'as if he was doing me a favour to hand it to me. I could have boxed his ears for his pains. "Does a person named Treherne live here?" says he. "The name is on the sign over the shop. Are you blind?" said I. "This letter is for Mistress Penrose Treherne," he said, cocking up his head as if he was a lord. Your aunt was in the back parlour chaffering with a customer, and lucky she was, or Mr Impudence would have caught it as he said,—"Deliver this letter to the person I named; it is from a young woman who is at the present an inmate in my

lady's house," and with that and a scornful glance round the shop, my gentleman went off.'

Penrose had eagerly seized the letter, and scarcely heeded old Karen's history of the airs of the footman who had brought it. She tore it open, and read with eager haste.

'12 GREAT ORMOND STREET.

'DEAR PENROSE,—This is to ask you to send my things quick by a carrier. I want my violin. Mr Handel says I am to have lessons on it; and, oh, joy! in time play in his orchestra. My Lady King worships the ground Mr Handel walks on, and does what he bids her. So I am to bide where I am for a month. I like to be here sometimes very much, though I want my dear Penrose. O'Brien is vile to me, and there is a Miss O'Connor I hate. She is trying to catch Sir Godfrey Stuart! Silly old thing! she is fifty at least and pretends to be twenty.

'I want to kiss you. I miss you at nights; then I often cry. But it is nice to see many fine people, and there is *one* person who likes to see your poor little Cherry! Guess who it is? I went to a rout last night, and Mr Handel was there. The grand people all wonder why he takes notice of me; but he *does*—and I adore him.

'The "Messiah" is to be given again at the Foundling on the 15th. To think of hearing it again makes me nearly out of my wits with joy. Oh, Penrose! when I am listening to *that* I feel as if nothing in the world mattered. It uplifts me, and I am quite another Cherry. Do you understand?

'Come, come and see me. I'll be on the watch early. They don't have breakfast till late; they sup chocolate in their bedrooms. O'Brien has to help dress my lady, and I get up and have the run of the house when the maidservants are sweeping and dusting. I am writing this now in the dining-parlour, where I found a big sheet of paper left out of my lady's case. But she bid me write for my baggage, and said she would send a footman with my letter. The servants are not very civil to me, and they know my home is at a shop, but I try not to mind. Oh! Penrose, Penrose, I do love you. Come to-morrow, it is Sunday, and you can easy say you are going to church. Aunt Prue won't know. See, I make round O's for kisses, and so I end. C. T.

'P.S.—I have been to Vauxhall; it was glorious.'

'Well,' Karen said. She had patiently waited

while Penrose scanned the closely-written sheet. 'What is the child about, eh?'

'She is very well,' Penrose said, strangling a sob—'and—happy. I must get her things ready—for—she is not coming home.'

'Poor little one!' Karen said. 'The mistress will have a long reckoning to pay if aught befalls her. Miss Prudence is as hard as nails, and she'll repent it one day—sure as my name is Karen Hodge.'

When Karen was gone, Penrose sat down and read Cherry's letter again, and yet again—each time with a greater sinking of heart. She was drifting away from her; the fine folks she spoke of were more to her than she was. She had escaped from the dull life in Broad Street and left her desolate.

Then Penrose fell to reproaching herself for yielding to Cherry's wishes, and going with her to Mr Handel to beg for the tickets for the 'Messiah.' Yes; it had all come from her weak compliance with the child's often-repeated entreaty.

Penrose went back in thought to Mrs Hope's visit—all Cherry's restlessness, or almost all, had dated from that time. Yet there could be no harm in the all absorbing-love for music which Mrs Hope had awakened. Who could have foreseen what

would follow? This cruel separation ; this haunting fear that mischief might befall one so innocent and guileless, so easily moved to excess of feeling, so uncontrolled when roused to any excitement, so lovely to look upon, and so likely to fall a prey to any designing person.

Who can measure the depths of an unselfish love like Penrose Treherne's? Still waters run deep, and Penrose did not indulge in many demonstrations of affection when with Cherry ; but she was her first thought and care, and had been so since the day—dim now in memory—when she had held the baby hand in hers as she followed her Aunt Prudence into the little back parlour, and heard that henceforth their home was to be with her.

Penrose now wiped away her tears, and, putting Cherry's letter into her large pocket, she went to the room in the roof which the two sisters had shared, and set about collecting Cherry's properties and laying them in an old oak coffer with a tender careful hand. First she opened the bureau where her own modest wardrobe was kept, and took out a flowered chintz, with emerald-green ribands, which Mrs Hope had given her.

Cherry must have it. She would never have the heart to put on a smart gown again. So, too, with a pretty apron and dainty little hat.

‘Always too smart for me,’ she said, ‘and fitter for her.’

Then there was a necklace of amber beads, which had belonged to her mother, with a heart attached to it. Penrose sighed as she consigned it to the coffer, wrapt in folds of paper, brown with age, the only thing she possessed that had been her mother’s. How she came by them she did not know. Once, when Penrose was fourteen, she had put them on, and was going into the parlour, wearing them, when Karen stopped her.

‘Don’t you show yourself in them beads to the mistress; she will order them off in a jiffy. They were your poor mother’s, and it was your father’s dying wish you should have them. But never you wear them; they will bring you bad luck.’

Those words of Karen’s were now remembered, and Penrose paused before she laid them in the folds of the chintz.

‘Bad luck! Would they bring Cherry bad luck? Yet it would please her to have them. It is foolish to be superstitious,’ and then the necklace was consigned to its place, hidden in the folds of the chintz; and Penrose thought how surprised and glad Cherry would be to find them all unawares,

At last all was complete. The violin in its case was laid on the top of the chest; but, before closing the lid, Penrose took a quill and the ink-bottle and a sheet of paper, and, kneeling by the deep window-seat, she wrote,—

‘DEAR CHILD, DEAR CHERRY,—I send what you ask for, and I hope you will find all you want. My dear, you are ever in my thoughts. I pray God to keep you from harm. Do not be led away by flattery, nor let your—sometimes high—spirits get the better of your good sense. I do not feel as if I could come to the grand house where you are living. I *was* coming, till I got your letter, I wanted so badly to know how you did; now you have told me, and I have no heart to come, and, indeed, there is no need. If you are happy, I shall try to rest quiet; but, Cherry, if you are in any trouble, let me know. That good, grave man, who came hither on the day of the Foundling performance, looks trustworthy; tell him if you are ever unhappy and he would let me hear.

‘I dreamed t’other night you were crying by my side, and started up to comfort you, and then—’

Tears fell like rain on the last page of the letter

and blotted it, so that the signature was scarcely legible.

‘From your sister, with her love,

‘PENROSE TREHERNE.’

‘Ah, Cherry! Cherry!’ Penrose cried. ‘She is gone from me for ever. A month, she says; nay, I feel it will be more like years; and the light of my life is gone out.’

She took up a little cap which she had forgotten, and kissed it passionately before she laid it in the chest, tucking the letter in the crown, and then the lid was closed, the key turned in the lock, and faithful, true-hearted Penrose felt almost as those do who bury their dead out of their sight.

The noon-day dinner was silently eaten. Miss Prudence was never prone to any conversation, and to-day she was unusually grim and reticent.

When the meal was finished, Penrose said,—

‘I have packed all Charity’s baggage, Aunt Prue.’

‘So much the better,’ was the reply.

‘Charity sent for her things. I had a letter from her this morning.’

‘So I heard—brought by an impudent lackey, Karen tells me.’

‘Can you permit Tom to take the chest on a truck to Great Ormond Street?’

‘I told you as much—it is a pretty long journey ; but, as I said, Tom may be employed when the shutters are put up—not before. I close early to-night. I am going to a meeting at the chapel hard by. You can come also if you choose.’

‘Aunt Prue, I hope you will forgive Cherry and let her come home—when she wishes to come.’

And as Penrose said this, she thought—Would Cherry ever wish to come?

‘If she chooses to behave herself she may come—you know my will about it, so it is no use plying me with questions. There’s the bell tinging. I’m wanted in the shop. Karen must have her dinner,’ and Miss Prudence bustled away.

Dreary days followed for Penrose. She longed for a sight of Cherry, and yet dreaded to be repulsed at the grand house by the lackey who had so scornfully looked round the shop, inquiring for a person named Treherne.

Very few neighbours ever came in to have friendly chats with Miss Prudence. She did not invite them, and rather avoided intimacy than courted it. Mrs Blake was, perhaps, an exception, and one afternoon, some days after the chest had been despatched to Charity, she came into the shop, and

was asked by Miss Prudence rather graciously to step up and have a dish of tea.

Mistress Blake was only too glad to accept the offer. Tea was a luxury, in which her stern, grave husband never indulged, and, indeed, in those days it was a costly luxury, and seldom found its way into the homes of tradespeople or the smaller gentry.

‘You’ll find Penrose upstairs in the parlour, walk up, and I’ll follow you shortly.’

Mrs Blake had never been in the parlour since that May Day when she had left Charity in the Foundling Chapel, and had made her way home alone to incur her husband’s wrath for having gone to the performance at all.

She found Penrose seated in her accustomed place by the window, but her work had fallen from her hand to her lap, and she was looking out absently into the street.

Mrs Blake felt a little uncertain how Penrose would receive her, for she had certainly caused a great deal of trouble by leaving Cherry and coming home without her.

‘Dear heart! Penrose,’ she began, ‘you look very pale. What ails you, my dear?’

‘I didn’t know I was ever rosy,’ Penrose said, avoiding the question. ‘Sit down, Mrs Blake, and

I shall soon be making a dish of tea for Aunt Prudence. Perhaps you'll stay.'

'Miss Prudence asked me,' was the reply, 'or I daren't have come up. I know you are offended with me, Penrose; you've never been near me all this long time. I am sure I wish I had never gone near that Foundling. I did it to please you.'

'Yes,' Penrose said, 'and it is all over now. Don't say more about it.'

'What's become of Cherry?' Mrs Blake asked. 'She has never been seen in these parts since, and it causes remark.'

'Charity is with a lady who is a particular friend of Mr Handel's, and she is learning to play the violin, and, I daresay, will soon be in his orchestra.'

'Lor'! Well, then, she is in luck's way after all. I've fretted about Cherry, I can tell you, for I know I ought not to have left her behind, but I was ready to swoon.'

'Do not say more concerning it, Mistress Blake. I am thinking of finding my way to Great Ormond Street, to try and catch a sight of Cherry. Will you come with me?'

'Well, I don't mind if I do; but it can't be till the child's a-bed, and James holding forth

about the New Jerusalem. He has a meeting in the back parlour at six o'clock. I'll just go back after tea, and see whether little John is asleep and old Joanna watching by him. If all is quiet, I'll come along this evening; the days are long now and the streets pretty quiet. There, Penrose, will that please you?'

'Yes,' Penrose answered; 'yes; and as Aunt Prue will be at chapel it is all safe.'

CHAPTER VIII

DRIFTED AWAY

IT was with a beating heart that Penrose went up the steps of No. 12 Great Ormond Street, and, pausing, said to Mrs Blake, who stood on the pavement,—

‘I am afraid to ring after all.’

‘Well, I call that folly, dragging me here for nought,’ Mrs Blake said. ‘I’ve no mind to come on a fool’s errand,’ and, briskly mounting the steps, Mrs Blake gave the handle of the bell a vigorous pull.

The door was thrown open almost immediately and Penrose, in a low, trembling voice, said,—

‘Can we see Mistress Charity Treherne, sir?’

‘I don’t know; the ladies are going to a rout at the Duchess of Abercorn’s. Stand aside! stand aside! the chairs are coming up.’

As he spoke, two sedan chairs were brought to a stop at the bottom of the steps, and, with wonderful

swiftness were, one after the other, placed in the hall, to await the arrival of the ladies. Presently Lady King came down the wide staircase, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, and reprimanded the chairmen for being late. Then, with the help of the footman, she stepped carefully into the chair, and calling in a shrill voice,—

‘Mistress Treherne, do not keep me waiting all night. Summon her, O’Brien, and I vow you have pinned my scarf crooked after all I said.’

Penrose and Mrs Blake had obeyed the footman’s orders, and were standing aside in the shadow of a doorway opening into a small room on the left of the hall, where the servant on duty to answer the door sat and received cards and notes and messages for his lady.

‘Mistress Treherne is never ready; it’s no fault of mine, my lady.’

‘Nothing ever is your fault, O’Brien. I ought to have learned as much by now, but this child is a plague, crying, perhaps, in a temper. Mr Handel’s *protégées* are somewhat of a nuisance, though, truth to tell, he would make one take up with a Hottentot if he pleased.’

And now, in the dim light of the hall, where one struggling beam of western sunshine came in through the small window by the door, a little white figure

was seen, violin in hand, coming down the wide stairs.

Cherry had been dressed for the occasion by Lady King, for Handel had requested that she should appear at the Duchess of Abercorn's rout, where music was to be the great attraction.

Penrose made a step forward and cried,—

‘Cherry!’

Cherry started, and looked round with a startled glance.

‘Who called me?’

‘It is I—Penrose. Oh, Cherry! I did so long to see you, dear,’ and Penrose, going forward, held out her arms to her sister.

‘I—I can’t stop now,’ she said hurriedly. ‘Why did you come so late? I said in the morning.’

And Penrose’s kisses were but hastily returned.

‘Who is this, I pray?’ Lady King said, from her chair. ‘I do not know, madam, who you may be, but you are preventing me from waiting at the appointed hour on her Grace the Duchess of Abercorn.’

‘I am Cherry’s sister,’ Penrose faltered. ‘I have been anxious at hearing nothing of her. I beg your ladyship’s pardon if I am intruding.’

‘The time of your visit is ill chosen, madam,’ Lady King said. Then to the footman,—‘Close

the chair and let Mistress Treherne's follow immediately. Now, Mistress Treherne, seat yourself without further delay.'

'Cherry! Cherry!' Penrose said, still with one arm round her sister, 'tell me, darling, are you happy?'

'Oh, yes, yes; don't keep me, Penrose; her ladyship will be angry. I must go—indeed I must. Good-bye—good-bye, dear!'

Then Cherry stepped into the chair. The footman closed it with a quick snap. The chairmen threw the straps over their shoulders, took up the poles, and Cherry, kissing her hand through the glass to Penrose, was carried swiftly away.

As she went, the stray sunbeam caught the amber beads which were round her neck, and as they burned with intense yellow light, a thrill of painful foreboding shot through Penrose's heart. Old Karen's words returned,—'Don't wear them beads, they will bring you bad luck.'

Penrose controlled herself before Miss O'Brien and Miss O'Connor, who now came up to her. Neither of them were in the best of tempers. Miss O'Connor was grievously offended that she had not been taken to the Duchess's rout, and poor Miss O'Brien had suffered greatly in assisting the waiting woman with her ladyship's toilette that

evening. Everything had gone wrong and her patience was pretty well worn out when she was taken to task about the crooked scarf.

‘Your time of coming, madam, is ill chosen; her ladyship dislikes any interruption when she is going a-visiting. I take it,’ turning to Mrs Blake, ‘you are Charity Treherne’s mother?’

Then Penrose spoke.

‘My sister has no mother. I beg pardon for intruding. I was anxious to know how Cherry did.’

‘Then I’ll tell you. She is scraping on the fiddle in one of the garrets from six in the morning to noon. She is in high favour with Mr Handel, and consequently with her ladyship; but pride will have a fall, or I’m mistaken; and if you care for Mistress Charity’s welfare, let me advise you to get her removed from this house, for there is a young beau always hanging about, and there is no rout or Vauxhall night but he is at her heels.’

‘Yes,’ Miss O’Connor said, tossing her head, ‘and the child’s head is turned; he is giving her presents. To my certain knowledge, she wears a crystal heart under her bodice, and these amber beads—’

Penrose interrupted Miss O’Connor.

‘These amber beads, madam, belonged to our mother, and I have given them to Charity. Now

I will wish you good evening. Come, Mrs Blake, let us be going.'

Mrs Blake now spoke.

'With all my heart, Penrose ;' and then, bridling, she addressed Miss O'Brien,—'I'd have you to know, madam, I am but seven-and-twenty years old, and could scarce be the mother of Charity Treherne, who is now seventeen !'

'Lord ! how affronted you are,' said Miss O'Connor, 'you are just my age, and I shouldn't grieve if I was taken for older.'

A little mocking laugh broke from Miss O'Brien as she said,—

'Some folks stay fast at seven-and-twenty and never move on, and you are one, madam,' addressing Mrs Blake ; 'but a married woman needn't mind age. It's spinsters who have cause to be particular.'

Penrose now put her arm within Mrs Blake's, and, without another word, went slowly and sorrowfully away.

'She did not care to see me. She has drifted away from me. She is lost to me. It will never be the same again, never.' Such were the bitter thoughts which were repeated again and again, and always with the same melancholy refrain. 'Drifted away from me—lost—lost to me—for ever.'

But these thoughts did not find words. Penrose would have borne anything rather than let Mrs Blake know what she felt. She listened to her companion's remarks with patience, and they were what might be expected from her.

‘ Well, I think Cherry is quite set up, Penrose, scarce knowing you, and only anxious to be off in the chair. Dear me! to think of little Charity Treherne riding in a chair, with a footman in waiting. And where did she get that gown? It was white taffeta. I warrant those two women have a spite at her; it was pretty plain to see. What did one of ’em mean about a crystal heart and a beau giving it to Cherry? If I was you, Penrose, I shouldn’t take it so easy. The child may come to harm, for that grand lady doesn’t care two straws about her. It’s just her craze for Mr Handel that makes her take her into her house. Yes, Penrose, I wonder you take it so easy, that I do. These two women were as rude a pair as ever I saw in my life. I was vastly tickled at that old thing asking if I was Cherry’s mother. Why, *she* might be my grandmother, almost. James *would* be put out. He always calls me “child,” and says I am almost as much of an infant as our little John. He is so wrapt up in this new religion, and is expecting I don’t know what to happen. I hope the meeting

won't have broken up, or James will be fancying I am lost. He may be grave and stern, but he dotes on me. He thinks there is no one like me. He gave me t'other day a pair of the best pink silk stockings in the shop. I'll show them to you. Would you like a pair half price? I often wonder, if the New Jerusalem does come down on earth, what will become of a trade like James's. There'll be no pink silk stockings wanted there ;' and Mrs Blake, childish soul as she was, give a little nervous laugh.

It was still daylight, for the clocks had only chimed for eight when the two women entered Broad Street. The beauty of the May evening had tempted many of the inhabitants to their doors. Some had been content to stay there and breathe the soft, balmy air. Others had wandered to the fields behind the houses, where in after years the child William Blake, with his highly-wrought, imaginative brain wandered and dreamed, and saw visions of angels in the trees ; nay, as he once said, God face to face. . All his fervent fancies fed by his father's creed, which he heard discussed at the tea-table, where the disciples of Swedenborg met year after year ; undaunted by the long-deferred hope, waiting, watching still for the great revelation, which, fixed for the year 1757, was yet hoped for and prayed for with

unflinching and undimmed faith. William Blake, the seer and poet, drew his first breath in the house in Broad Street where his mother now stopped with Penrose Treherne. Five or six men and two or three women were just coming from the door. The women with flushed cheeks and eyes aflame with enthusiasm; the men with bowed heads and grave, reverent demeanour, as if they had come from a solemn meeting. As indeed they had. To the disciples of Swedenborg this new religion was a great reality, and the belief in it was gathering strength day by day. Then, as now, there were always minds of a certain type who are ready to catch at any manifestation which may pierce the veil between the seen and the unseen, and, while trying to grasp shadows, they too often miss the substance and at last, end in the darkness of faithlessness and unbelief.

James Blake did not invite Penrose to come in, but, taking his wife by the hand, he said,—

‘You are late, Catherine; it is time to retire to rest.’

Then, with a bow to Penrose, without further question or remark, James Blake shut the door on himself and his wife, and Penrose, with the heavy burden at her heart, went to her own home.

Karen was watching for her at the door.

‘Mistress is not come in,’ she said; ‘that’s lucky for you. She is at one of the revival meetings, and mayhap will be out for another hour. Ay, but how wan and tired you look, Penrose,’ the old woman said. ‘Come in and I’ll get a sup of broth heated for you. Why, alack, Penrose—what ails you?’

The kind words and evident concern were too much for poor Penrose. Her usual calmness and self-restraint forsook her, and, throwing her arms round the old woman, who had known her from the day she had first crossed the threshold of her aunt’s house to this moment, she wept upon her breast, sobbing out,—

‘Cherry, Cherry, she will never come back; she does not wish to come back to me; I have lost her—for ever.’

‘Well, you don’t want her to come and have the door shut in her face, I hope, my dear. There, don’t ’ee fret. The Lord will take care of her, and it will be all right some fine day.’

Then Karen laid Penrose on the hard, unyielding couch in Miss Prudence’s back parlour and went to the kitchen to prepare a supper for her, ‘for she looks faint with hunger and sorrow, poor dear,’ she said as she stirred the broth and threw into it some leaves of marigold for a flavour. I wouldn’t stand

in mistress's shoes for a gold piece, turning her back on that pretty child; and if harm befalls her she will repent it—if so be such stiff folks as Miss Prudence ever can repent.'

Little Pearl, the blind child, had always been a favourite at the Foundling Hospital; but now, since Mr Handel had singled her out for his especial notice, she became the centre of attraction to many of her companions, and to the nurses and governesses who superintended the children's education.

There was something in little Pearl which showed an innate refinement, and the rude and the boisterous—of whom there were many in that mixed throng of little ones, gathered as they were from the very dregs of society—grew gentler in her presence. She had not only the gift of song—which had attracted Mr Handel's notice—but she had a wonderful gift of language, and would keep her little companions spellbound while she told of her visions and dreams, weaving them into stories about mysterious personages, whom she saw with mental vision, and who were to her as real as if she saw them with her bodily eyes.

The doctor, who had the care of the girls, would often shake his head when he saw Pearl, and by his orders the routine of learning, and the instruc-

tion in various sorts of useful handiwork, were in little Pearl's case lightened.

The girls were not only taught to sew and knit, and perform household duties, but they were taken, as they were old enough, into the large kitchen and learned to scour and clean, and, as they showed ability, to cook, and were thus fitted for domestic service when the time came for them to leave the hospital.

'That child will not live to go out to service,' the doctor said, 'so let her have an easy life, and do not force her to do anything to which she is disinclined. With a brain like hers, the little, frail body will be worn out quick enough;' and if the matron replied, 'Pearl never ails anything,' the doctor would only say—'You will see I am right. She comes of a delicate race of gentry. One can tell that by the blue veins on her forehead, and her small hands and feet.'

'Yes,' the matron allowed, 'all that is true; there is something in Pearl different from most of the children, and there is a mystery about her. Her token is a costly ornament, and tells that those who brought the child had no right to claim the charity, and there are others like them, I daresay.'

It was the Eve of the Ascension in 1751. The

organ, Handel's noble gift to the chapel, had been opened on May Day in the previous year, and now the 'Messiah' was again to be performed for the benefit of the charity to which he had proved so great a benefactor.

It was the recreation hour, and the children were playing on the wide squares of turf which lay before the hospital. Little Pearl was the centre of a group collected under a tree which cast flickering shadows on the grass. A stout, rosy girl of twelve was one of her most devoted admirers, and, lying on the turf at her feet, leaned her head against Pearl's knee, who was by common consent allowed to occupy the wooden chair which had been brought from the hall.

'The sky is very blue to-day, isn't it, Marjory?'

'Yes, and there's white clouds sailing along it,' was the reply.

'White clouds! The Lord went up to Heaven in a white cloud.'

'How do you know?' asked one of the children.

'It is in the Bible, of course, that's why I know it! Didn't you hear the parson preach about it in chapel?'

'I don't know,' was the reply, 'I can't listen to the preaching.'

'That's a pity,' said little Pearl, simply, 'p'raps I listen the more because I can't see.'

'Tell us a story, Pearl,' Marjory said; 'tell us what you see sometimes, or fancy you see.'

'I *do* see; it ain't fancy,' Pearl said decidedly.

'Yes, yes, I know what you mean—go on.'

'When we were rehearsing this morning, I'll tell you what I saw.' Pearl paused, as if to collect her thoughts, and then the lids closed over her beautiful eyes, and the long fringes lay upon her fair cheek. 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,' the child said. 'As we sang, I saw a man with a face full of love looking down on a great bowl of shining silver; it was so bright, so bright; and then as we went on and sang, "He is like a refiner's fire," I saw the big fire blazing, and then the silver bowl was thrown in, and I knew why—it was to come out brighter. Yes; so it did; ten times brighter, like the sun, and the man held it up and there was his face seen in it, and he smiled and smiled, and I knew why—the silver was purified, and I felt so glad, and then—'

The children started to their feet, for all unawares there had been a listener to Pearl's story, even Mr Handel himself. Pearl did not ask who was there, as her companions, awe-struck, dispersed like a flock of frightened pigeons, all but stout-hearted Marjory,

who could not leave Pearl to go to the house without her hand to guide her.

‘It is Mr Handel,’ Pearl said.

‘Yes, yes ; child, you have the double gift—the music is not only heard by your ear, it is in your inmost soul. Ah ! little one, many a poor, weary man would give half he possessed to see what you see; it is a gift of God, verily, a gift of God.’

Pearl had no fear of Mr Handel ; she rose, and taking his hand, kissed it, saying,—

‘It is you, sir, who make the pictures for me—by your music. How can I help seeing what the music shows me? Don’t you see them too, sir? I know you do.’

‘Alack ! alack ! not always, only on occasion, little one. I am distraught, and great blasts of fury at the folly of men come sweeping over me, and then my spirit’s eyes are blinded. Soon—very soon—my outward vision will be gone. I shall be blind like you, little Pearl.’

The child had risen from her seat, and Handel had sat down on it, holding Pearl’s hand and, drawing her nearer to him, he repeated,—

‘Blind like you, little one.’

‘But you will be happy, sir. You will still make music for yourself and for all the world, and you will see beautiful pictures, more beautiful than mine.’

‘God grant it,’ was the reply, ‘God grant it; but I am scarce worthy. I am to be put in the furnace very soon now.’

‘To come out brighter,’ Pearl said quietly.

‘God knows, the knife of the surgeon is to do what it can for my eyes, leaving them worse, not better, I warrant. I chafe against it; I rebel; I am not as you are, little one.’

‘Ah, sir; but it is different for you. I am happy because no one wants me to see; but all the world wants you to have sight, to write more of the beautiful music.’

‘Dear child — *liebes Kind*,’ Handel said, with infinite pathos in his voice, ‘but I am an aged man now. There is scant time left for me to work — the night cometh wherein no man can work.’

Then there was silence more eloquent than words. Handel still held the little hand in his, as if he found in it comfort and strength. Presently the silence was broken by Pearl’s clear, child-like voice as she sang the air of the bass song—‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them hath the light shined.’

‘It is enough,’ Handel said; ‘out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has He perfected praise.’

Handel's moods were many and various. In these gentle and pathetic ones, when the weight of his affliction pressed on him, he was most attractive, and won many hearts as well as little Pearl's.

The performance of the 'Messiah' the next day was most successful. It was almost the only work of the great composer, on which he could depend, to bring him a large sum. Five hundred coaches as well as chairs brought the nobility and gentry to the chapel. Thunders of applause burst forth during the performance, for in those days the sacredness of the house of God was no barrier to an outburst of enthusiasm, which we should now think out of place there. The profits on this occasion amounted to seven hundred guineas, and the Foundling Hospital was again indebted for this large addition to its funds to the generosity of Handel.

Handel, after this extraordinary success, gave the Foundling Hospital a copy of the score of the oratorio, and promised to come and conduct it himself every year.

And now the governors and administrators of the charity were so ill advised as to prepare a petition to Parliament to ensure their right in it, after Handel's death, praying that a Bill might be brought into the House for that purpose.

When one of the governors waited on Handel at his house in Brook Street, with the form of petition drawn up, he very soon found out his mistake. The kindly musician, who could speak so tenderly to the blind child on Ascension Eve, and whose large heart beat with keenest sympathy whenever he saw the Foundling children gathered in the chapel, or playing in the garden round the hospital, vanished. Instead, an angry man, fuming with indignation, and the discomfited governor had to beat a hasty retreat, murmuring such humble apologies as he could think of, while Handel shouted,—

‘The ’tevil! for what shall the Foundling put mein oratorio into the Parliament? The ’tevil! my music shall not go to the Parliament!’

The petition was therefore set aside, and the next time Handel appeared at the governors’ table he made no reference to what had passed; but in his usual kindly manner begged that a minute might be made to certify that he would always conduct the oratorio in the chapel himself, and be glad to give the proceeds for the benefit of the charity on every future occasion as long as he lived.

CHAPTER IX

AT ST CRISPIN'S

1753.—IT was a quiet autumn day in the late October of 1753, when Sir Godfrey Stuart pulled up his horse at the gates of St Crispin's Manor, and, throwing the reins to his servant, walked slowly up the long avenue of limes towards the house.

These autumn days have always a sad message for those who have long since passed the summer of their lives. Falling leaves which strew the pathway, fading flowers hanging dejectedly on their stalks in the garden, seem to be types of dead hopes and vanished joys which no springtime will recall.

The lime trees above Sir Godfrey's head, on the boughs of which a few yellow leaves still hung, or dropped one by one silently at his feet, to be with their dead companions swept in heaps by the roadside, would be clothed again with emerald

green, and 'the ruined choirs' would again echo with the songs of 'the sweet birds,' and quivering shadows would be thrown across the path by the young leaves as they danced in the sunshine.

Sir Godfrey was in no haste to reach the door, where once in days long past a joyous welcome awaited him. Indeed, his pace grew slower and slower as the old grey house with its many gables came in sight.

In those long-past days he had thought the hottest speed to which he could urge his horse too slow to bring him to the quaint, antique porch, under which a girlish, nay, rather a childish, figure would be standing with a bright smile of welcome and some saucy speech which ended in a ripple of merry laughter as he sprang from his horse and gave her a lover-like greeting.

We often ask ourselves, in a sort of querulous unbelief in our own identity, whether we can be one with the image of our dead selves which some familiar place and surroundings conjure up?

Sir Godfrey, as he stretched out his hand almost reluctantly to the deer's-foot handle of the bell, half dreading to hear its jangle break the silence, felt that uncertainty as to his identity with the young man of fifteen years ago which is the common

fate of advancing years. But if changed in all outward things, his heart was loyal and true, and there was a ring of kindly feeling in his voice, as he said to the old servant who answered the summons of the bell,—

‘Well, Watson, how goes the world with you? You look in good health. And how does the mistress do?’

‘Dear heart, Master Godfrey—lor’! I beg pardon! I always seem to forget you be a baronet now. How be you? I am right glad to see you. You haven’t walked, surely?’

‘No, no! I sent my horse round to the stables.’

‘You ask for the mistress, sir. She fares much as usual—much as usual. Lor’! when you come I always think you may bring news. Mr Heneage don’t come as often as he ought to. I wonder at him.’

‘Yes,’ Sir Godfrey said. ‘Yes, Watson; as you say, he ought to be here oftener.’

‘He leaves too heavy a burden on my dear lady, settling of accounts and wages; and Mr Barlow is getting up in years, and ain’t as sharp as a steward ought to be, and that’s the truth, sir. You’ll excuse my freedom, but you know I mean no offence.’

‘I know if ever there was a faithful servant, you

are one, Watson. Shall I find Mrs Heneage in the winter parlour?’

‘Yes, sir, yes; she moved there first day of this month. It’s a law here to kindle fires on that day, and put ’em out first of May. It’s not my lady’s law, but you know who rules the house and me into the bargain.’

‘Ah! I daresay for your good, Watson,’ Sir Godfrey said, laughing. ‘I shall pay Mrs Watson my respects in her room before I take my leave.’

‘And she’ll be main glad to set eyes on you, sir, you may depend,’ Watson rejoined, as he preceded Sir Godfrey to the remote winter parlour which his mistress occupied.

The large dining-room and spacious reception rooms at the Manor had long been unused. The mistress inhabited a wing in the oldest part of the house, which was quite apart from the desolate corridors and silent chambers opening from them, through which Sir Godfrey passed to have an interview with Mrs Heneage.

She rose to greet him with an exclamation of pleasure. Then, as Watson closed the heavy door behind him, Mrs Heneage said,—

‘Any news? Bad news, Godfrey?’ Then she added, as he kissed the hand she held out to him,—‘I have borne so much, sure I can bear

more, if it be God's will. Have you aught to tell me of *her*?'

'No, madam, no,' Sir Godfrey said, with the formal address of the time. 'I have naught to communicate about one we have mourned as lost for years.'

'Then your tidings concern my son Jasper. Do not scruple to tell me—is it money he needs? Has he fought in a duel? Has he been involved in any disgraceful escapade?'

'No, madam. I may with all honesty assure you that in general conduct Jasper has really amended his ways; but—'

'Ah,' Mrs Heneage said, 'I had a presentiment that a "but" would come, must come. Do not keep me in suspense, Godfrey. He is ill, he is suffering, I must go to him.'

Again Sir Godfrey had a ready answer.

'Your son is well. But he has conceived a passion for a young girl, and is fain to marry her.'

'Who is she? What is she?'

'She is a musician whom Mr Handel has taken under his care to educate as a performer in his orchestra. She is very beautiful and, I firmly believe, innocent and guileless, as far as, God help them! any woman can be in the whirl of gay

society, for the world of London does not get purer and better, and it is hard to escape contamination.'

'Yet you have escaped, Godfrey. You have lived in the world, but never have been of it.'

'You do me too much honour. It may be the discipline of a sorrow of which you know has preserved me.'

'Ah! Godfrey, my good and long-tried friend, we have sorrowed together. Will the day never come when we shall rejoice? But of this girl. She is poor, I take it, and of what family does she come?'

'Charity Treherne is an orphan, and was dependent on a sister of her father's for maintenance, till Mr Handel discovered her remarkable gift for music, and made her his *protégée*. The great man has a tender place in his heart for the young, as you know, and Charity Treherne has touched it.'

'Well, tell me more of her. This aunt—who is she, and where did Jasper meet her?'

'Miss Treherne, the aunt about whom you inquire, keeps a shop in Broad Street, and it was there by the merest accident Jasper first saw her niece. He swears he then and there fell in love. I have tried to treat the matter lightly, nor

strengthen it with too pronounced an opposition, but as years have passed and Jasper's love has not cooled, I deemed it right to lay the whole matter before you, dear madam, and ask you to give the consent without which Charity Treherne would not wed with your son. Moreover, I have sometimes feared he would resort to desperate measures, and do what, as we know, has been done, nay, is still done—carry off the poor child, and, having got possession of her, he might do her an irremediable harm. The girl is beautiful; many eyes are upon her; but she is, as I have said, by no means light or foolish in her conduct. Music is her passion, and in two years she has made the most extraordinary progress, and although her execution on the instrument she loves may be inferior to that of more practised musicians, yet the pathos which she brings out of the violin, when she plays a solo to Mr Handel's accompaniment, brings tears to many eyes. And Handel himself now, as you may have heard, deprived, or nearly deprived, of sight, feels the touch of genius in Charity's rendering of many of his songs on the violin, and she has solaced the blind man by her gift, in some of his saddest hours of darkness.'

Mrs Heneage listened to all Sir Godfrey said with her face turned from him, looking wistfully

out on the park and the lime-tree avenue, as she had looked, for many years now, from the windows of the winter and summer parlour, hoping against hope that one, whom she had loved and lost, would be seen coming along the familiar path—homewards at last!

Mrs Heneage was one of the rare women on whom the traces of age and sorrow do not leave a cruel mark. She was still beautiful with the beauty of soul shining through her eyes which had been no strangers to tears, and with the grace of bearing, of which no trial could deprive her. Tall and stately, with her height accentuated by the crown of silvery hair swept back from her level brow, and a figure guiltless of the enormous hoops then still the fashion, she might still be said to be in the full prime and vigour of womanhood, though she had entered her fifth decade. Sorrow had not embittered her, and on her lips was ever the law of kindness. She had withdrawn from the world and lived for many years in seclusion, but everyone in trouble or sickness came to the Manor, secure of sympathy, and, if it could be rendered, of help.

Presently she broke a silence by saying,—

‘Music—the gift of music has oft proved a dangerous possession. Do we not know it, Godfrey?’

‘It need not so prove, madam. Let us remember it is in itself a divine gift, to soothe the weary, and give comfort to the sorrowful and lift the soul heavenwards.’

‘Ah, but how often is it but the vehicle of strong passions and uncontrolled emotions mistaken for love. Is it again to come into my life and bring sorrow with it? Yet again, as it has done before?’ Sir Godfrey well knew what Mrs Heneage meant, and he felt powerless to reply when she added ‘You cannot gainsay this, Godfrey. You cannot wonder that my heart misgives me, my sore heart. Yet if the girl is virtuous and pure—if my son has determined to leave the ways of folly, if not worse, for her sake, how can I say him nay? Where does this girl live? Over the Broad Street shop?’ There was a slight curve of the lips as Mrs Heneage repeated, ‘Over the shop in Broad Street.’

In what visions she had indulged of the marriage of her only son to one of gentle birth and endowed with a fortune which would keep up the Manor in the style of past years. Many a time had she pictured how, having seen a young mistress installed in the old home of the Heneages, she would resign her place there and take up her abode elsewhere. Now all these fair visions were

dispelled. No bride of ancient lineage would be brought to the home of Jasper's ancestors, but a girl who had been brought up in a humble rank of life, and, almost worse in Mrs Heneage's eye, was a professed musician.

As we try to realise the manners and customs of a century and a half ago, we have to remember how completely everything has changed since then. Musicians—that is to say those who lived by their performances—singers and players on any instrument, composers even were not recognised in society as they are in these days. A marriage that Handel himself had contemplated with an English lady of large fortune was broken off because she stipulated that he should give up the profession he loved for her sake. This he refused to do, and thus his declining years found him without the love of wife and child—a lonely old man, though the favourite of princes, and once the dear friend and chosen companion of Caroline, the clever and accomplished queen of George the Second.

Now musicians hold their proper position. Those who give the world their work in oratorios and cantatas, and those who, by the gift of song, or skill on organ and stringed instruments, interpret their works to a sympathetic audience, are honoured as they deserve, and by the highest

lady in the land as by many of her distinguished subjects.

Mrs Heneage had, it is true, reason to shrink from accepting as her son's wife a girl who lived by her skill as a musician. Nor was the fact that she was the niece of a tradeswoman in Broad Street more repugnant to her feelings than that she played the violin in Handel's orchestra.

We must not forget that the best men and women take the colour of the times in which they live, and are insensibly affected by it. Therefore Mrs Heneage must not be judged too harshly, as she asked,—

‘Does this young person live over the shop now, Godfrey?’

‘No, madam; she left her aunt's house some two years ago, and has been living with an Irish gentlewoman, who received her, in the first instance, at Mr Handel's request. Now that Charity has made her mark, and is often called upon to play at routs, and again and again at St James's, Lady King has altered her manner towards her. She has a room appointed for her practice, and is treated with consideration. Her conduct has been irreproachable, and so entirely is she wrapped up in her music, that she is, as I said, free from any light or foolish behaviour, and no man would

dare to take undue liberty with her. I have often seen her keep flatterers at bay, and I believe Jasper's love is quickened by the very scant response he ever gets. I have known her return costly presents he has made her, saying they were unsuited for her. I have seen her, by what I believe is an innate purity and innocence, recoil from the loose behaviour and conversation which are alas too prevalent. I have not yet told you, madam, that Charity Treherne has a sister who is absolutely devoted to her. This sister still lives with the aunt, old Miss Treherne. She is one of the best of women, and has all the native refinement of a true gentlewoman, albeit she has been bred in a tradeswoman's house.'

This was a brave assertion for Sir Godfrey to make. There was a great gulf set between tradesfolk and gentry in those days, and it is only within the memory of most of us that the vulgar notion that there is anything degrading in earning an honest living, has happily been banished by all sensible people. A woman, whether of gentle or lowly birth, who chooses to be independent and to labour as a teacher, or with her pen or brush, for a maintenance, now wins respect and admiration, instead of contumely and foolish pity and contempt.

Mrs Heneage listened patiently to Sir Godfrey, and said with a smile,—

‘You are a skilful special pleader, Godfrey. What would you have me do in this matter?’

‘See Charity Treherne and judge for yourself, madam, and this you can do by communicating first with Jasper, and telling him you are ready to do this.’

‘I must ask you to make the proposal, Godfrey. I do not feel competent to do so. Take upon yourself the responsibility, and so oblige me.’ Mrs Heneage’s voice betrayed that her heart was sore, as she continued. ‘If my only son has not placed confidence in me in this important matter, it is not for me to force him to do so. Ah! Godfrey,’ Mrs Heneage exclaimed, ‘I may take up the patriarch’s cry, and say “I am bereaved of my children.” One—one is not, and the other has long ago ceased to be a comfort to me. Hard! yes, it is hard when one’s children vanish and leave the mother, who loves them still, desolate, so desolate. You cannot understand this. Forgive me for saying so much, but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak sometimes.’

Sir Godfrey felt as if he could not press the matter further then, he merely said,—

‘I will see Jasper on the subject, and Mistress

Treherne as well, and I will not trouble you further now. I must be returning to London.'

'Nay, you must not do so; your old chamber is always at your service; remain for the night. Good old Watson will be chagrined if you refuse, and I shall be disappointed. So rare are guests in this deserted house that one like yourself is hailed by both mistress and servants.'

Sir Godfrey stayed, and wandering before supper amongst the paths through the grounds once so familiar, the whisper of the autumn breeze in the branches of the trees, seemed to repeat the words of the mistress of that fair estate — 'Desolate!—desolate!'

CHAPTER X

THROUGH DARKNESS TO LIGHT

‘Go on, go on! why do you stop?’

‘It is dark, sir; we cannot see the score.’

‘And do you need to see the score; make way, give me my seat at the harpsichord. Here, child, lend me your hand; thank God I can yet play, though sight is denied me.’

Charity Treherne put her hand into Handel’s and led him to the stool, from which a young man had just risen.

Handel had summoned his old pupil, Christopher Smith, from France, where he had been travelling, to assist him in the spring of this year, for the great master was now quite blind. He had submitted to three operations, under one of the most skilful surgeons of the day, who attended the Princess of Wales, but there had been no successful results. Hope had been strong in Handel’s breast that he should at least partially

recover his sight; but now he had resigned himself to the inevitable, and, considering his choleric temperament, was remarkably patient and often cheerful. No one who heard him at the organ, where he still often presided, could have believed that he was blind. So marvellous was his memory that he could go through the most intricate of his compositions without faltering.

This evening there were several of his favourite pupils in his room in Brook Street. Charity Treherne had been rehearsing the violin accompaniment of some parts of the oratorio of 'Samson', which had a pathetic significance, now that he who had composed it was blind.

'I will play,' he said. 'Now,' to Christopher Smith, 'sing, sing, and you, child, follow with the violin.'

Christopher Smith prepared to obey, first lighting a lamp which was suspended over the instrument.

'I cannot render this song, sir, as it ought to be rendered,' he said.

'I tell you, sing,' was the reply, 'and, Cherry, strike the A. Ah! gently, it goes through my head. Lower—lower—so—it is enough.'

And then there sounded out the words which might well move those who heard them to tears.

‘Total eclipse ! No sun, no moon,
All dark amidst the blaze of noon.
Oh, glorious light ! No cheering ray
To glad my eyes with welcome day.
Why thus deprived thy prime decree ?
Sun moon and stars are dark to me.’

When the last strain of Charity’s accompaniment ceased, Christopher saw, by the light of the lamp, that tears were rolling down her cheeks.

A little, short sob caught Handel’s quick ear.

‘Nay, child,’ he said, ‘do not grieve. We must all be steady to-morrow when we shall be in public. No tears then—no tears then. Dost hear?’

‘Yes, dear master, yes. I will try not to weep.’

‘That is like a brave child. Little Pearl is brave. Says she, “I am happy without sight, for when I hear sweet music I see fair and lovely things—far fairer and lovelier than most folks see—and mayhap the same visions will come to you, sir.” Yes—yes—yes,’ Handel said, ‘little Pearl is right. The visions are coming. At first it was darkness, and evil voices seemed to mock at my calamity ; but God has not failed me, and He sends His angels to me, as well as to that dear child.’

Christopher Smith was now called from the room to see some of the many aspirants who often besieged Handel’s house, seeking to be

allowed to take some part in the orchestra, either vocal or instrumental.

When Smith was gone, Charity led Handel back to his chair, and taking her accustomed place on a stool at his feet, she said,—

‘Dear master, I am much troubled about a suitor. I never knew a father, and I feel as though you were what a good father would be to me so I can tell you of my trouble.’

Handel laid his large hand gently on the bowed head and said,—

‘I would fain help you, child, if it be in my power. Who is the suitor? For my part, I should expect to hear, from my Lady King’s report, that you had many.’

‘No, sir, I will not let the gay beaux I see so often get so far as to be suitors, but this gentleman is different. He vows when I play I am as David to Saul; that he would fain be good, and that he hates things now in which he once took delight, and all since he has known me.’

‘Ah! have a care—have a care, Cherry. Young men promise much to gain their point, and give but scant fulfilment of their promise. Who is he, this gallant suitor?’

‘He is one, Mr Jasper Heneage, of high rank,

sir, and I am of low birth, as I have told him scores of times.'

'Dost love him, child? That is the main point.'

Charity was silent, then she said,—

'Not enough to give up music for his sake, and this is the hindrance—a hindrance greater than the truth that I am a tradesman's daughter. My good friend and his, Sir Godfrey Stuart, has seen Madam Heneage, a proud lady who lives in seclusion owing to some great sorrow of heart, and he has so far won upon her as to gain her consent to receive me, if I will give up playing in your orchestra, sir, and all routs and concerts. I cannot do it. Music, and to be under your care and instruction, is my life. How can I give it up? I cannot. I cannot.' Charity spoke with all her old enthusiasm. 'It would go near to kill me. I should die!'

'Gently, gently, child; death comes not from such a cause. I am nearing the dark valley; old age is creeping over me, and I feel death to be mysterious and solemn, not to be spoken of lightly. Despite blindness, age, and troubles of health resulting therefrom, I love life and care not to leave it.'

'I love it, sir, also; but life would be nothing but a dreary blank without music.'

‘This goes to show you do not favour the young man’s suit with any real purpose; then, I say, have none of him.’

‘Ah, thank you, thank you, dear master!’ Charity said, delighted to find Handel’s advice and opinion agreed so well with her own feelings.

She rose and said the chair must be waiting for her, and Lady King’s men would resent being kept waiting.

‘Hearken, little one, before you give a final answer to the young fellow, weigh well the two sides in the balance. Music, ah! it is divine; but there are times, in the hours of darkness, that I have yearnings for the love of wife and child, denied me. Yes, there are lonely hours in old age when companionship would be sweet, so have a care, have a care! We will do our best to-morrow; mind the passage in the overture; the first violin is trustworthy, but as he beats time he needs good support—give it to him.’

‘Ah,’ Charity said, ‘it is my violin that shocks many folk, sir. It is said no woman should play a fiddle. Singing is permitted, but not a violin.’

‘And the day will come,’ Handel said, ‘when half the violinists in the world will be women.’

‘I may not sing,’ Charity said, ‘as you know, sir,

because of my weak chest; the violin can express for me what my voice may not.'

A loud tap at the door now showed the chairmen were in the hall, and Charity bid Handel a hasty good evening, and was soon borne to Great Ormond Street, two link-boys in attendance with flaring torches, for the evening was dark.

Charity had remained in Lady King's house since the day she entered it after the opening of the organ at the Foundling. Two rooms, or rather garrets, at the top of the house were given her, and Lady King was rather proud to say a favourite pupil of Mr Handel's, of extraordinary genius, was under her protection.

Lady King was absent in Ireland at intervals and then Charity was left to the care of the old housekeeper, with whom she took her meals, and with whom she was on friendly terms.

In Lady King's absence, Penrose was free to come and go, and always with the hope that at last she should effect a reconciliation between her aunt and Charity. Few guessed how barren of all joy Penrose Treherne's life had been since Charity left her, although, when she saw her, she would throw her arms round her and cover her with kisses, still the elder sister felt that there was a dividing gulf between them. Charity could never now resume the

old dull life over the shop in Broad Street—her ways, even her manner of speaking, told of intercourse with those who moved in a very different sphere from that in which both girls had passed their childhood and youth.

Charity was not the same as in the old days, and yet as dear, perhaps dearer, to Penrose.

When the chair-men had set Charity down in the hall, Mrs Beecroft, the housekeeper, came up the stairs from the lower regions.

‘I thought you was never coming, child ; here’s two letters for you. One is a billet left by that young beau, Mr Heneage ; t’other was brought by a young man from aunt’s shop. My lady has sent to say she comes to-morrow, and we are to be ready. Short notice, and the house not cleaned down ! Well, you don’t seem vastly well pleased with your billets.’

Charity had thrown off her hat and cloak, and now stood under the lamp, reading Penrose’s note.

‘Aunt Prue is very ill. Come to-morrow, for she has been calling out your name. Mr Blake will call at the door early and bring you. I dare not leave Aunt Prue. She is very near death, and I think dreads to die unforgiving ; so be sure to come, dear Cherry.’

Mrs Beecroft saw Charity's face was pale, and her hand trembled as she opened the other letter.

'Is aught amiss, child?' Mrs Beecroft asked.

'My aunt is dying, and I must go to her to-morrow.'

'Lord! I shouldn't trouble. She was pretty sharp on you, wasn't she? I'd as lieve let her die as she has lived—a hard, close-fisted old woman, so I have heard.'

'Don't speak of her like that, Mrs Beecroft,' Cherry said, with the sudden revulsion of feeling so common, when death is drawing near to one we have had no cause to love in life or to mourn for in death.

Death softens our harsh judgments, and hides the faults that we have complained of, and, it may be, suffered from. Death is the great healer of old sores, and the young, especially, often feel a vain regret when those are taken away to whom conscience tells them they have shown no sign of affection, but against whom they have cherished resentful feelings, and rebelled against their rule.

'Well, come down to supper, child; you look like a ghost.'

'I had supper at Mr Handel's,' Charity said.

'And a rare good one, I'll warrant, if he didn't eat the lion's share himself. I have heard tell

that he can swallow food for three as easy as food for one; but, poor old gentleman, now he is stone blind, his appetite may not be so big. Now step into my room below for a minute, child. I have just brewed a hot drink, and you shall have a sup, for you look as if you wanted a "night-cap" to send you off.' And in a lower voice—'I've somewhat to tell you, that I don't want others to hear,' nodding at the porter who was leaning back in his chair with a copy of the *Flying Post*, a week old, in his hand.

Newspapers were not abundant in those days, and news travelled slowly, even from one end of the Metropolis to the other.

Charity followed Mrs Beecroft down the dark, stone staircase leading to the servants' apartments of the house, and dismissing two maid-servants to bed, with the information that they were to be up and doing by five o'clock the next day, the house-keeper stirred the dying embers of the fire, and bidding Charity sit down and warm her feet on the wide fender, she asked in a mysterious voice,—

'Have you read that young beau's billet?'

Charity did not speak. She was scanning the closely-written lines which were not very easy to decipher, for Jasper Heneage was not celebrated for good penmanship or spelling.

The letter was in the impassioned strain then common in the love letters of the day.

‘Why will you not see me? Why so cruel? I have seen my mother. She cannot hold out against you “if once she sees you. No, nor if she hears you make that heavenly music. My heart is pierced with sharp arrows when I think by this long delay others may win your favour. I gnashed my teeth last night when I heard two arrogant fellows daring to boast of your kindness to them over their wine, and giving you as a toast. You shall be *mine*, Charity, sweet Charity, and I swear no one else shall have you. Ah! do not send me back to the depths from which you have rescued me. I will have a coach ready after the performance of “Samson” at the Foundling, and you shall fly with me to St Crispin’s. My mother will not say me nay; you shall stay with her till our marriage day, and that day shall be soon. They say Godfrey Stuart has an eye on you for himself. If I thought so—but no, I will not harbour such a thought, it is outrageous. Remember to-morrow, at the gate of the Foundling.—Your humble and devoted servant, J. H.’

When Charity had read the letter, Mrs Beecroft said,—

‘Hearken, missie, the young man was in a wild state when he came hither. He talked so fast and loud, I could not get a word in. He swore you were in the house, and he would see you. I bid him remember that when her ladyship is absent no gentlemen enter the house save Mr Handel, by your order. He swore Sir Godfrey had been here, and I told him, by saying it, he gave me the lie, for he had never set foot in the house since her ladyship left it. He was talking wild and fast, and I think the wine was in and the wit out. Yet he is a comely youth, and half crazy with his love for you. If I was you, I would end it one way or t’other.’

‘I have tried to end it,’ Charity said; ‘I have said, without his mother’s consent, I would not marry him, and I will hold to it. I would not be looked down on by a grand, proud lady. I am half distraught to-night, for my sister Penrose is to send for me early in the morning, and there is the oratorio of “Samson” to be performed. Mr Handel would be angry if I were absent. Mrs Beecroft, did you ever see any one dying?’

‘Lord, my dear, many a one—my husband and three children, bless them! all taken for death by a fever.’

‘I dread to see Aunt Prue,’ Charity said. ‘It makes me shudder to think of it. Yet, as Penrose would have me go, go I must.’

‘Well, it’s what we must all come to,’ Mrs Beecroft said. ‘It’s the one thing *certain* for queens and princes, and for poor folks who have scarce a rag to their backs. Don’t ’ee be afraid, my dear ; sometimes the aged look younger when they are dead than those who are crying over them—don’t ’ee be afraid.’

But Charity was afraid ; her emotional temperament shrank from the sight of anything painful. She lived in her own world of dreams, which music called into life. All that was fair and beautiful was a delight to her, and she had a certain pleasure in watching the ladies in their fine brocades and diamonds, when she attended the routs with Lady King, and played for their amusement. It did not concern her that but few amongst the gay crowd cared for her music. When once she had full command of her beloved violin, idle chatter and laughter around her, subdued perhaps by request of the hostess, did not disturb her ; she played on, her whole soul intent on expressing all that the music meant to her. What it was to others was but little in comparison. Nor was the often perfunctory applause which greeted her, half

as much valued as a smile and *bravissima* from the great master himself. Sometimes, indeed, she had to endure a frown instead of a smile, and an outburst of indignation if a string broke or a note lost something of the perfect precision which Handel's keenly-sensitive ear demanded from singers and instrumentalists alike.

Charity went to bed that night in a tumult of feeling. Dread of what was before her at her aunt's deathbed, and distress at the idea of being borne off by Jasper Heneage from the gates of the Foundling.

'No, I will not go with him,' she said. 'I will get Mr Handel to protect me. I do not know that I love him. Yet I could not be happy if I thought he would be wretched without me. I wish—how I wish—I had someone to tell me what I ought to do! I shall see Penrose to-morrow. I will ask her or Sir Godfrey. I must try to see him. What does Jasper mean by saying he cares for me? Does he mean he is in love with me? No, I will not think it possible; yet he is my best friend, and sometimes I have thought he cared for me because I am desolate, with no home. For this is not *home*, yet I am glad to be here, for how could I have learned even as much as I have learned in any other place. What did O'Brien say one day?

That I was only a chattel, and that Lady King keeps me to lease the master. What do I care? I forget everything, everyone, when I feel music wrapping me round—uplifting me. Ah, what does the rest matter?’

Poor child! she had a restless night, haunted by dreams that made her start up again and again and long for the day.

Once she thought in her dream that she heard voices singing, ‘As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’

‘Yes, yes,’ she cried, ‘I hear it, it is true; I know it is, and death means life—life. I will not be afraid.’

She was up and ready the next morning before the uncertain daylight of a late October had conquered the mists and shadows which lay upon the streets and squares of the city. As the clocks struck seven in sonorous tones, Charity heard the rasping sound of the hall door bell.

‘It is Mr Blake,’ she exclaimed. ‘I am ready.’

Enveloped in her cloak, which entirely hid her little figure in its dainty dress, the hood lined with cherry-coloured silk tied close under her chin, Charity, with her violin in hand, went down the narrow stairs leading from the attic storey to the

corridor below. Looking over the balustrades, she saw Mr Blake standing in the hall, awaiting her coming. He was grave and solemn, and said,—

‘We have no time to spare.’

‘What do you mean?’ Charity said.

‘I mean that Mistress Prudence has not long to live.’

Then he was silent, and Charity had some difficulty in keeping up to his long strides with her little, short, light footsteps.

‘How dull and chill it is!’ she exclaimed involuntarily.

‘It will be brighter soon,’ was the rejoinder.

‘Yes, when the sun is up; but the sky is so dark and clouded.’

‘It will be brighter, ere long,’ Mr Blake repeated. ‘Only four years to wait now—and then—then,’ he continued in an impassioned tone, widely different from his accustomed voice and manner, ‘then the New Jerusalem will descend as a bride out of Heaven, and all that is sinful and all that is sorrowful will vanish for the chosen of God.’

‘How do you know, sir?’ Charity ventured to ask.

‘Emanuel Swedenborg has had the revelation from God, and that is why I know—why I believe.’ James Blake’s faith was strong, and

when 1757 came and went, and yet no New Jerusalem descended, he believed still. 'Though it tarry, wait for it,' was his watchword, and that of many of Swedenborg's disciples.

That year, which was to have wrought such a wonderful change in the history of the world, was yet to be an important one in the household of James Blake, for in his house a child was born, who, surrounded from his cradle with the atmosphere of the mystics and visionaries who met under his father's roof, was to leave behind him a name, as artist and poet, of which his father little dreamed.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE SHADOWS

IN the dim light of a dull and lowering October morning, Charity Treherne crossed the threshold of her aunt's house for the first time since she had left it years before. Tom was on the watch. The shutters were not taken down, but he was standing by the open door, and greeted Charity with—

‘The mistress ain’t dead yet.’

Where, where is my sister, Tom?

‘Above stairs; she hasn’t left her, day or night, for a week past.’

Then Charity passed through the shop door into the hall, and looking up the wide stairs saw Penrose standing on the top. Penrose was pale and worn with many days and nights of watching, but she was calm, and said in her gentle voice,—

‘I am right glad you have come, dear. She has asked for you so often. Take off your cloak, and give me the violin, and come into the parlour.’

‘Oh, Penrose! I am so frightened. Must I see her? Does she look very dreadful?’

‘No; she is changed, but she has a look on her face which you need not shrink from seeing. Hark! she calls me; I must go to her. Come with me.’

Trembling and hesitating, Charity seized Penrose’s hand.

‘Wait! wait! give me time.’

‘Dear, there is no time to spare and nought to fear,’ and Penrose drew Charity’s hand through her arm and led her to the room on the same floor where Miss Prudence lay.

‘Is that Charity?’ she asked in a faint but eager voice.

‘Yes, Aunt Prue. Yes.’

‘Come hither, child! I would fain look on you. Ah! I cannot die without feeling sure all is well with you—I forbade you the house—I cast you adrift. Has harm come to you?’ and the poor, sunk eyes scanned Charity’s face with an intense earnestness.

‘No, Aunt Prue.’ It was Penrose who spoke. ‘Charity has been cared for, and she has come to no harm.’

‘You are sure, quite sure? I have feared it might be her mother’s story over again. And if she had gone astray, *I* was to blame. I could not

die in peace till I knew. There! kiss me child, and say you forgive me.'

'Yes, yes, Aunt Prue; and do forgive me. I was often very—'

Tears choked poor Cherry's voice.

'It is all well now, child, as you are safe. Penrose will tell you everything I have is left to her. And you—you'll be too grand to live in this poor place, but if you want a home you can have it. There! kiss me, child, and may God keep you safe—safe in this evil world.'

It was but the flicker of the flame of life before it finally went out. The intense longing poor Miss Prudence had to see Charity had given her, when the longing was gratified, temporary strength. Now, as Charity bent over her and kissed her, the light faded from her eyes, and the pallor of death settled down on her face.

'Pray,' she said, 'pray,' and Penrose, kneeling, repeated in her calm voice, trembling a little as she went on,—

'As she passes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, oh, Lord! let her not fear evil; let Thy rod and Thy staff comfort her, for Christ's sake.'

A smile flickered over the face where the once hard lines were now smoothed out, and old Karen, who had stood a little apart, presently said,—

‘She is gone! my poor mistress is gone! Come away, Miss Charity, there is no more to be done for her—no more. I’ve served her these forty years, and I can never serve her any more.’

Then faithful Karen’s tears and sobs, long restrained, broke forth; and Penrose, raising Charity in her arms, half carried her into the parlour, and poor Penrose herself, utterly exhausted and worn out, gave way to her sorrow and wept bitterly.

‘She has been much softened of late, Cherry, and kind to me; she has, I know, wished to send for you, only pride kept her back. One of the members of the Methodist persuasion has visited her of late, and I think what he said to her yesterday decided her to send for you. Now, dear,’ Penrose went on, ‘you can come home whenever you wish, for everything is mine, and, of course, yours. So we may be together once more, Cherry.’

But Cherry did not answer. Her mind was full of Jasper Heneage’s letter, and his threat of carrying her off in a coach from the gates of the Foundling.

‘Oh! Penrose,’ she said at last, ‘I don’t know what to do. One thing is certain—I must be at the Foundling to-day, or Mr Handel will be angry; yet I would fain escape it.’

‘Not to-day—not to-day. Surely he would excuse you to-day if he knew what had happened here.’

‘No ; it is necessary for me to go. I must go. Oh, Penrose ! Penrose ! Mr Handel is blind, and he is a good friend to me. I rehearsed last night, and I must take my place in the orchestra. Do not stop me. I will come back soon, if—if—I can.’

Penrose knew of old that Charity would ever take her own way, so when they were refreshed with the breakfast Karen brought them, she saw Charity enveloped in her long cloak, and, escorted by Tom, who carried her violin-case, set off for the Foundling at ten o’clock.

‘It is as well that she should go ; this house of death is no place for her, Karen.’

‘As much as for you—so it seems to me. That child is the same as ever she was—self first, other folks second. The dear mistress was right. She is just such an one as her mother, and when I saw those yellow beads round her neck, thought I to myself, “it might be her mother standing there.” You are of a different sort, Penrose. I only pray the Lord to send you a good husband, for it’s high time somebody took care of you. You ain’t fit for the burden of the business with no

help. But we must see to the burying of the mistress. Seems to me there's only you and me to do aught for her now.'

The chapel at the Foundling was crowded, and there was the same collection of chariots and chairs and liveried servants, and throngs of humbler people who came on foot and had great difficulty in getting through the throng. Everyone was eager to secure a good place, and be within sight of the orchestra, where the blind composer of the oratorio was to give a concerto on the organ before the performance of 'Samson' began.

At last all were seated, and the doorkeepers resolutely refused to admit another person.

'I have no ticket. I am a stranger,' a lady said, 'but I will give you five golden guineas if you will admit me.'

'I daren't disobey orders. Those orders are, to close the doors at the stroke of twelve, and the clocks have struck.'

'Oh! do not refuse me,' the lady urged. 'Take the money to one of the governors; take it to Mr Handel himself. Do not refuse me.'

The doorkeeper—like most officials, who are pleased to exercise their authority—was obdurate, and simply stood against the door, with his

back to it, without deigning to say another word.

At this moment a young man, dressed in the latest fashion, with a three-cornered hat set on his freshly-curled and powdered wig, came hastily to the door.

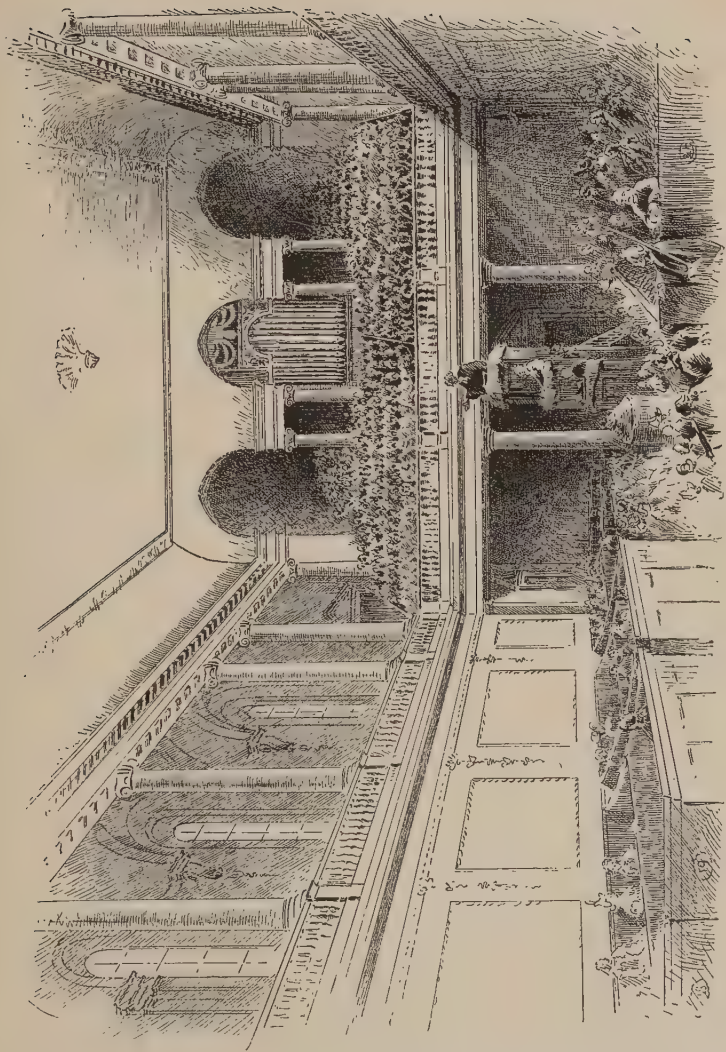
‘Admit me instantly,’ he said. ‘I have Mr Handel’s order. Here, take it, you villain, and open the door.’

The last stroke of twelve had sounded from the neighbouring church towers, and in another few moments the sound of the organ would be heard.

‘Open the door,’ Jasper Heneage said, ‘or I’ll make you repent it.’

‘Oh, sir,’ the lady said, who had offered a bribe for admittance, ‘I, too, must enter. I entreat you, do your best for me. I have been abroad for years, and I have an intense longing to hear Mr Handel’s oratorio.’

The lady’s hood was so closely drawn over her face that it was impossible to see her features, but her voice was wonderfully clear and musical, and the hand which held out the purse with the guineas in it was white and slender, and Jasper saw a ring of great value glittering on her finger.



CHAPEL OF THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

Another official now came up, and seeing the aspirants for admission were evidently 'quality,' he said to his subordinate,—

'Let this gentlewoman and gentleman pass in; the clocks have but just struck.'

'Take 'em in yourself,' the man grumbled, and the next moment Jasper Heneage found himself in the lobby, the lady saying,—

'Give them the money. Take my purse and give it.'

But Jasper hesitated.

'Nay,' he said; 'we are in now, and there is an end of it.'

'The tickets are selling for a guinea each that were not taken beforehand, sir,' the official said, and, calling the book-keeper, he ordered two to be given to the lady and gentleman, saying, 'One guinea each.'

The money was paid, and, just as the cheers had subsided which greeted Handel as he took his place at the organ, Jasper and the strange lady were shown to their seats in the chapel.

'Can't we go nearer—nearer the orchestra?' the lady asked.

'No, madam; every seat is occupied,' was the short answer.

An organ concerto, played by Handel, usually

preceded the oratorio, and was a chief attraction of the performance. To-day it was surpassingly beautiful — played by the hands of him who had written it, and whose sightless eyes could no longer follow the touch of his fingers, which seemed to have a power of expression greater even than they had possessed before he was blind. There was not a single false note from beginning to end.

The cheers at the conclusion of the concerto were hushed as the first notes of the overture to 'Samson' were heard.

The solo, which had been rehearsed the night before in Brook Street, touched everyone who heard it.

Handel, who was seated at the organ, was seen to grow pale. His hands trembled, and when the words, 'Total eclipse! No sun, no moon,' rang through the chapel, tears rained down his cheeks. How strangely appropriate were the words!

Many eyes were dim with tears when, at the close of the oratorio, Handel was led to the front of the orchestra, and stood there, overcome with emotion, as the audience rose with one consent and the chapel echoed with their cheers again and again.

Handel bowed in acknowledgment, his sightless eyes raised, his hand grasped by his old pupil, Christopher Smith, who was scarcely less affected than his master.

‘Sun, moon and stars are dark to me,’ whispered a clear young voice as Handel turned towards the orchestra again, the performers all on their feet, and the principal singers crowding round to offer their congratulations. ‘Sun, moon and stars are dark to me.’

Handel knew who spoke, and he said,—

‘Let little Pearl come near.’

The child was led to him by Charity Treherne, and Handel laid his hand on Pearl’s head.

‘Ah, little one,’ he said, ‘these words are true for you as well as me. God help us!’

Pearl raised her head, and those who were nearest heard her say in the same clear though low voice,—

‘In God’s light we shall see light, dear master.’

‘Verily,’ Handel said, ‘the child is right. Yes, little one, you and I and blind Milton will see that light at last. Who can tell? God in his mercy grant it!’

The chapel was getting clear of the crowd, and the voices of the servants and porters were heard in the lobby calling for chairs and chariots to come round.

My Lady Coventry's chariot stopped the way, and the reigning beauty of that season, Maria Gunning, resplendent in jewels and surrounded by a bevy of admirers, upon whom she bestowed the smiles which no man of that time could resist, left the chapel, way being made for her through the crowd of obsequious lackeys and attendants. Royalty could scarcely have had greater show of reverence than Maria, Countess of Coventry, received whenever she appeared in public.

The chapel was almost empty, but the lady who had succeeded in gaining admittance remained.

'Can I be of service to you, madam?' Jasper Heneage said. 'We ought to be leaving the chapel now.'

'No, sir; I thank you,' was the reply. 'I have business with the governors of the Foundling, and must see them before I depart. I will wait till the throng outside has dispersed, and bidding you good-day, I would fain thank you for your attention.'

Something in the voice seemed familiar to Jasper, and brought back in some indistinct fashion memories of his early boyhood and childhood.

The lady had kept her hood so closely tied under her chin that her features could not be

seen, and throughout the performance her eyes had been fixed on the orchestra, and never for one instant did she turn her head or seem to take any notice of those around her.

Jasper, whose mind was occupied with the scheme he had for carrying off Charity, had paid little attention to his companion, and it was not till he was leaving her, that he had thought about her at all.

But now as he made his bow, he said,—

‘I would fain know, madam, to whom I have had the honour of speaking before I take my leave of her.’

‘Your curiosity, sir, has, I fear, got the better of your courtesy, and I decline to satisfy it.’

‘I crave ten thousand pardons, madam. Let me hope that the governors, with whom you seek an interview, may be more courteous and less curious!’

With this, Jasper, highly offended, went quickly to the door of the chapel below the gallery and disappeared.

Jasper waited at the entrance for some time. The coach he had ready was out of sight, for he feared to excite attention, but he had servants on the watch, and they had directions that when he gave the signal the coach was to drive to the entrance gates, and the door was to be opened

so that there might be no delay in entering the chariot.

It was the custom of the governors of the Foundling to invite Mr Handel to a sumptuous repast after the performances of the oratorios. The performers themselves were not forgotten, and a cold collation was provided in one of the rooms of the hospital, where plenty of substantial food could be had, and ale flowed freely.

Charity knew that Jasper Heneage would be on the watch at the door leading from the front of the building. She felt ill and worn out with the scene of the early morning, and a great longing for Penrose and rest possessed her. She had some faint hopes that Jasper would not carry out his intention, and that, if indeed he was there, when she left the hospital, that she might prevail on him to spare her from what would certainly disgrace her in the eyes of the world. Perplexed and troubled, she could scarcely swallow the food which Christopher Smith, Handel's old pupil and now faithful assistant, entreated her to eat.

He poured out from a large jug on the table a mug full of spiced ale, which was then a popular beverage with singers and musicians, and of which on this occasion they drank freely.

Poor Charity felt in no mood for the laughter

and chatter which sounded on every side, and when she had taken a sip of the ale, she said to Christopher Smith,—

‘I want to get home quickly, not to Great Ormond Street, but to Broad Street. Will you help me?’

‘I must await Mr Handel’s pleasure,’ Mr Smith said. ‘He depends on me to guide him to his coach, and I have given him my word that I will write at his dictation this afternoon. I may have time to accompany you, but you will understand I am bound to think first of our dear master.’

‘Yes, yes. Could you procure me a chair? Is there one to be hired, think you?’

‘It is possible. I will inquire of one of the porters; but, Mistress Treherne, I pray you take more refreshment, you look so wan and pale.’

The expression of sympathy was too much for poor Charity. She burst into hysterical sobs, and Mr Smith led her out of the room and, seating her on a bench in the passage outside, went to find one of the attendants of the hospital.

Jasper was on the alert. He had stationed himself where he could see the door whence he knew Charity, with the other performers, would come out, and he was at her side in an instant. He had her arm drawn through his before she had time

to think, and holding her hand in a tight grasp she was borne along across the wide space in front of the hospital, towards the great gates at the further end.

To resist seemed hopeless. Weak and faint and breathless, Charity could scarcely make her voice heard.

‘Take me home, if you love me,’ she said. ‘Oh! I pray you take me home.’

‘Your home is with me, my sweet one. Be not afraid; you are safe with me. Ah! you know not how I adore you.’

They were outside the big gates now, the coach drawn by four horses stood ready, and Charity was lifted into it. Jasper was following, when a strong hand was laid on the door, and a voice, familiar and oh! how welcome, said,—

‘Hold, Jasper! I forbid you to do this.’

‘By Heaven! Stuart, I will have satisfaction from you. Leave go!’

‘I will not leave go. Do not make a scene before your servants. Is *this* your love for yonder poor child? See, she has swooned. For shame, Heneage!’

It was indeed true. Charity had lost all consciousness of what was passing, and was lying on the cushions of the carriage in a dead faint.

‘What on earth is to be done now?’ Jasper exclaimed. He was seriously frightened and enraged at the thought that his servants were witnesses of what had happened, and had seen his carefully-laid plan circumvented. ‘What on earth is to be done? Good Heavens! she looks like death.’

Sir Godfrey was as much at a loss as Jasper. He knew too well that Charity would be compromised if this escapade was known. The indignation he had felt against Jasper was softened when he saw his real distress; and to add to the seriousness of the position, people who were passing began to stand and stare at the coach with its postilions and four horses, and the servants and two gentlemen surrounding the door.

Sir Godfrey had never before felt in such a dilemma. To drive to Lady King’s house in Great Ormond Street with Charity would cause endless discussion when she returned that day; and as he thought Miss Prudence’s door in Broad Street was closed against her, it would only add fuel to the flames if Charity were to ask for admittance under present circumstances. All this passed through Sir Godfrey’s mind more quickly than it can be written here, and Jasper stood by cursing his folly, and in despair asking what was to be done to restore Charity to con-

sciousness. At this moment a lady was seen hastening through the large gates, and coming out, she passed the coach just as Charity had sat upright, bewildered and unable to realise what had happened.

‘Where am I?’ she exclaimed. ‘Where am I? Oh! let me go to Penrose;’ and she struggled to get down the high steps of the coach. Suddenly, with a cry of mingled delight and surprise she exclaimed, ‘Speranza! Speranza!’

The tall lady, enveloped in her cloak, stopped.

‘Who called me?’ she said.

‘I—Cherry—don’t you know me?’ and in another instant Charity had thrown herself into the arms of her friend, Mistress Hope.

‘My child! my poor child, what does this mean?’

‘It means,’ Sir Godfrey said, ‘it means, madam, that this poor child has had unfair usage at the hands of this young man, from whom I am striving to deliver her.’

Sir Godfrey had scarcely uttered the words when Mrs Hope loosened her hood, and looking at him said in a low tone,—

‘Godfrey!’

Like one who had been struck by a sudden blow, Sir Godfrey staggered against the carriage door and exclaimed,—

‘Margaret—at last!’

‘Hush!’ she said, recovering herself, ‘tell me what I can do for this poor child.’

‘Take me—take me to Penrose, oh, Speranza! take me to Penrose. Aunt Prue is dead, and I must go to Penrose.’

But Jasper now spoke, and with the assumption of one in authority.

‘This coach and these servants are mine; this young gentlewoman shall be taken to her future home, St Crispin’s. Say, Stuart, you who know my mother, is not this right and just?’

‘No—no,’ Cherry said; ‘no, I will not go to be scorned—I will rot.’

‘Hush! hush! dear child,’ Mrs Hope said, ‘there are many onlookers; we cannot talk more here. I cannot go to St Crispin’s; therefore, if I am to do aught for Charity Treherne, it must be to take her home. Come,’ she said, ‘we know our way. I know it well, for I have trodden these streets many a time between the hospital and Broad Street. Come, trust Charity to me, and, you foolish boy,’ she said to Jasper, ‘proceed where you list with your chariot and servants—we need none of your protection.’

‘Who are you that you dare to order me?’

‘Who am I? I must needs let your curiosity

go unsatisfied for a space,' and then she took Cherry's hand in hers, and saying to the gaping crowd which had gathered round the coach, 'Good people, let us pass,' she went with rapid steps round the turning of the street, and was soon out of sight.

Sir Godfrey Stewart did not attempt to follow her then. He had much ado to quiet Jasper, who, humiliated and angry, gave vent to his feelings by a string of oaths and curses which made one of the bystanders say,—

'Poor youngster! 'tis hard to have the fine cage for the bird, and the bird flown.'

Jasper was turning on the man in a passion of rage, when Sir Godfrey said,—

'A truce to this, Jasper, nor make yourself a spectacle for these people; get into the coach and I will follow you.'

Jasper was persuaded at last to do so. Sir Godfrey followed, and gave orders to the footman in a peremptory tone,—

'To St Crispin's as fast as may be,' and in another minute the coach and the four horses were out of sight.

CHAPTER XII

MEMORIES

MRS HENEAGE was alone in the winter parlour late on the evening of the same day when 'Samson' had been performed at the Foundling Hospital. Her slender fingers were at work on some warm garments for the poor, and as she worked, her thoughts flew back to the past as was their wont, and again and again a sigh broke from her. Presently she went to an old bureau, which stood at the end of the room, and opening a drawer by touching a spring, she took out a miniature of a beautiful girl and pressed it to her lips.

'It is your birthday to-morrow,' she said. 'How we used to keep your birthday in past years! Ah! Margaret—Margaret, my pearl, my dear one, where are you now? Sure you could not dream I should be unforgiving. Nay, when I wrote that

first letter I blotted it with tears, but you never answered it. Was it hard and cold? I know not now. And here is Jasper, a little innocent boy—he was but ten years old when you left me. Who could believe this fair-haired child, with eyes as blue and clear as the sky, could be the Jasper of to-day? “How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed!”’

Mrs Heneage replaced the miniatures in the drawer, kissing them both as she did so, and returned to her work by the wood fire, which was dancing merrily upon the hearth.

‘This girl that Jasper would fain marry—am I doing right to oppose the idea? When Godfrey comes again I will ask to see her. Yes, if it is for my boy’s good, why should I hold back? Pride ought long ago to have left my heart, for there is nought to be proud of. An old name; our race, as far as I know, pure and without reproach, and now who can say this of the Heneages. Well is it that my children’s father was in his grave before this happened—before this dark shadow fell over our home. Hark! there is the sound of wheels and horses’ hoofs. Who can it be? It is dark and the wind is sobbing in the trees, betokening rain, and—as I have noticed before—trouble. Who is it, Watson?’ she

said, as Watson opened the parlour door. 'What is it?'

'It is a coach and four, madame, and Sir Godfrey and Mr Heneage are in the hall.'

Mrs Heneage rose and stood prepared to meet her son.

He came hurriedly in; his face was flushed and, to his mother's surprise, he threw his arms round her, saying,—

'Mother! I am in sore distress—comfort me.'

Many a long day had passed since Jasper had spoken thus to her, appealing to her for comfort.

'My poor boy!' she said. 'My poor boy! What is it? What can I do?'

'Let my only love come to you; receive her as a daughter; be good to her, for she is as an angel from Heaven to me. If I lose her I lose all, and I care not what becomes of me. For two long years now I have loved her, and the thought of her has done more for me than you can tell. She will not come hither to be scorned and looked down on; but, I believe—nay, I know—if you took her to your heart she would bless you with her love.'

'Sit down, Jasper; let us talk of this quietly,' Mrs Heneage said, resuming her usually calm

manner. 'We will speak of this when you are refreshed and rested. You look ill and fevered.'

'Yes, I am ill and sick at heart. Stuart has meddled, as usual. I was to bring her hither in the coach which has now brought me, and I swear my intentions to the sweet creature were honourable. I swear that I would not hurt a hair of her head; but have her for my own I must and will.'

He got up and paced the room, untying his neck-tie with its costly lace ends, and flinging it with his sword on the ground. Then he pitched his finely-curved wig into another corner, and finally threw himself on the sofa from which his mother had risen, and buried his face in the cushions.

Mrs Heneage quietly picked up the things her son had scattered, and then seating herself by his side, she smoothed his hot forehead with her gentle hand and was silent.

In that silence she prayed for her son—her poor, undisciplined, foolish boy—that God would show her how best to deal with him, and what course to pursue. Did this Charity Treherne really love him? Was she all he vowed she was, shedding over him an influence for good? 'If it be so,' she thought, 'I will offer no further opposition ;

but I am doubtful, yes, very doubtful, as to the girl's feelings for him. Poor girl! It may be that she would have a thorny path to tread, and she would be happier left in the station of life to which God has called her.'

Sir Godfrey Stuart had purposely absented himself from this meeting between mother and son. He had borne Jasper's excited abuse of him for his interference with wonderful patience. But in spite of the quick pace at which the postilions urged their horses, the twelve miles seemed to stretch out to an interminable length. Sir Godfrey knew that he had saved Charity from what would, not unreasonably, have been looked upon by the world as a discreditable elopement. It was useless to repeat to Jasper that he would have done her an irremediable injury if he had succeeded in carrying her off. Sir Godfrey knew that already Charity had excited jealousy by her beauty, and her musical gifts, and that there were many who would be only too ready to throw a stone at her. Sir Godfrey had saved her, and he was contented to bear Jasper's indignation, sure that in the end he would be grateful to him for his timely interference.

The supper passed off without any reference to what was in the minds of the three people,

who sat at the well-spread board and were waited on by Watson.

Sir Godfrey was glad when Jasper declared his intention of going to bed; and kissing his mother more affectionately than he had done for many a day, left her with the words,—

‘Hear what Stuart has to say about her, mother. I suppose you will believe his word, if not mine!’

‘I always trust the word of my best friend—of *our* best friend,’ Mrs Heneage said. ‘For I know,’ she added, when Jasper had closed the door, ‘that he is a staff on which I may safely lean.’

‘Dear madam, I hope to God I shall never betray that trust. About Jasper, I would say I think this love for Charity Treherne has been of use to him. And, indeed, when compared with the painted women of the world with their airs and graces; who change their suitors as they change the ribands on their caps, and toy with hearts as with so many playthings, Charity Treherne appears to great advantage.’

‘I will see her, Godfrey, I will see her; let her be brought hither. And as to pride, sure I have had enough to humble my pride. I will accept this girl as my son’s wife if you feel assured of her love for him.’

Sir Godfrey hesitated.

‘Dear madam, that is a hard question for me to answer, but you shall judge for yourself.’

Then there was silence for a few minutes. The wind sighed in the branches of the trees, and sent with sudden gusts a dried leaf against the window pane.

The wood fire slumbered on the hearth, till Sir Godfrey, rising, touched one of the logs with his foot, and a merry flame with a hundred sparkles leapt up. And Sir Godfrey knew that just as he had kindled those slumbering embers with a touch so he was now to awaken in the heart of that stately lady opposite him a thousand memories, and at the same time renewed hope.

Mrs Heneage was yet very fair to look upon; the flickering firelight played upon the masses of her silvery hair, and caught the diamond ring on her hand, as it hung over the arm of the old oak chair with its quaint, carved back, surmounted with a shield on which was carved the arms of the Heneages, and the motto:—‘For God and the right.’

Sir Godfrey spoke at last.

‘I have news, madam—news of Margaret.’

Mrs Heneage started to her feet. Her eyes were fixed searchingly on Sir Godfrey’s face, her

hands were clasped as if in entreaty, as she said,—

‘News! What news?—quick! tell me. I can bear it, but *not*, not suspense.’

‘I have seen her,’ Sir Godfrey said.

‘Where? when?’

‘To-day, for one moment—in the knot of idle people gathered round the coach in which Jasper had placed Charity Treherne. I saw her. I question whether I should have recognised her, for she wore a black cloak and the hood well drawn over her face, had not Charity sprang towards her, and calling her Speranza, entreated her to take her home.’

Mrs Heneage sank back in her chair again, murmuring,—

‘I don’t understand—Charity—Charity Treherne knows my Margaret? There must be some mistake, Godfrey—some great mistake.’

‘No,’ Sir Godfrey said, ‘there can be no mistake.’

‘But Jasper! Jasper—did he know it was his sister?’

‘How could he, madam? We forget how long it is since—since we lost her.’

‘Since we lost her. Yes, yes.’

‘Jasper was a boy—it is thirteen years ago—

and besides he was too much excited and angry to give her a thought, or anyone a thought.'

'Are you sure? are you sure? Oh, Godfrey! we must find her out. Whatever has happened, whatever she has done, poor child! she must know it is all forgiven. It is her birthday to-morrow. I had been looking at her portrait when Watson came to tell me you were come. What is to be done? Think! Something *must* be done at once. Let me go now to find her, my lost Pearl, my Margaret!'

Sir Godfrey knew this unwonted excitement would pass, and that Mrs Heneage would recover her accustomed calm demeanour, and he waited patiently.

'Can a woman forget her child?' she exclaimed. 'No, no! Margaret is still mine; tell her this—or let me tell her. Godfrey, do you hear? I cannot forget.'

Yes, he heard; and presently going up to Mrs Heneage, he took her trembling hand in his and kissing it, said gently,—

'Do you think that *I* can forget? Dear madam, *I* can never forget!'

'But you forgive, Godfrey; you will not be harsh; you will seek her out and—and bring her here?'

‘You know I forgave long ago; naught was left in my heart for her but love and pity. Oh! what deep pity, God only knows.’

‘That bad man who accomplished her ruin—the musician, the deceiver—is he alive?’

‘I know not, madam, but I have a clue to find her through this strange meeting with Charity Treherne.’

‘How was that? How could that be possible? It is this, Godfrey, that makes me fear you are mistaken. It was not Margaret; it was another woman. What do you say the girl called her?’

‘Speranza.’

‘Speranza—hope. Ah, me! ah, me! You are mistaken, Godfrey, you are mistaken.’

‘I am *not* mistaken, dear madam. I pray you to trust me, and I will leave here ere the sun is up on the morrow, and, returning post-haste, will assure you that I am right.’

‘You are ever good and true, Godfrey; all that a son might have been to me, you have been of late. Dear Godfrey,’ Mrs Heneage said, ‘pardon me if I seem ungracious. You have suffered, you were deceived—think you that I do not remember this?’

Sir Godfrey could only reply by another pressure

of the hand he held, and another kiss as he bowed his head over it.

‘You know,’ he said, dear madam, ‘I would serve you—or—*her* to my latest breath. And now good-night.’

When Sir Godfrey had left her, Mrs Heneage sat for some time gazing into the dying embers of the fire. The far past lived for her again. Her vanished children were children once more. She saw before her Margaret, in her sweet, innocent childhood, proud of the little brother who came so long after her birth and after his father’s death. She saw her in her beautiful girlhood, when life seemed so fair, and her hope to see her Sir Godfrey Stuart’s wife was about to be realised. Ah! and she heard her voice, that voice which thrilled so many hearts, the voice so full of passion and pathos, which gathered a crowd of admirers round her in that season at St James’s when she fell under the evil influence of an Italian singer, who was a professional musician at the Court, and who disappeared at the same time as Margaret Heneage.

Such disappearances are, however carefully a plot is laid, all but impossible in these days. The machinery of detectives is at once at work, telegraph wires flash messages in all directions, photography gives its aid, and the speed of communica-

tion by railway and steamer makes it comparatively easy to discover the actual position of those who may wish to keep it from their friends.

It is difficult for us, at the end of the nineteenth century, to realise the condition of the country in the middle of the eighteenth; and in the story of the people who lived and moved in the higher or lower ranks of life at that time, we must bear in mind how wide is the gulf which separates us from them, and their manner of life, their customs, their language and their modes of thought, and even of their sense of right and wrong. The life at Court and in the mazes of fashionable society was a furnace out of which many like Mrs Heneage came out pure and unscathed. Wesley was sounding the trumpet-note which called on the slumbering Church to awake, and the reaction from dull indifference as to religion, had already set in.

But we have only to think, as a single instance of the frivolity of the world of fashion, that certain of its leaders rebelled against Handel's oratorios, and did their best to compass his ruin by promoting balls and masked *fêtes* at Vauxhall on the very nights when any of his magnificent oratorios were advertised to be performed. Since his return from Ireland, this opposition had grown weaker, and it became the fashion to take tickets for the

performances at the Foundling Hospital, when royal princesses and members of what was called *haut ton* set the example. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the words of the 'Messiah,' more especially when wedded to the music of the great master, touched many hearts as no sermon ever did, and that Handel sounded deeps which had never before been stirred, and awakened longings for Him who, in that marvellous oratorio, he followed from the song of the angels on the hills of Bethlehem to the last dark scene of our Redemption, and then to this joyful resurrection from the grave.

Nor is that power dead now.

Surely in our own day the 'Messiah' still holds its own. Year after year it attracts a listening throng, and, in spite of many other newer and most beautiful compositions, we sit spell-bound as the familiar strains are poured forth, and, like poor little Charity Treherne, can say we are uplifted by its power. Perhaps this is in a great measure due to the simplicity as well as grandeur of the great work. We need no profound musical knowledge, no appreciation of the framework of perfect art, which is undoubtedly present in the oratorio. We *feel*, if we do not know, why the music appeals to us, and expresses for us our secret

longings and hopes, and thus is sufficient for our needs.

How many have taken comfort from the outburst of faith and hope, when, after realising the certainty of death, the equal certainty of the life to come sounds its triumphant note,—‘Even so shall all be made alive?’—the music adding strength to the words which, when once heard, is connected with them henceforth.

CHAPTER XIII

UNKNOWN

TOM was keeping guard in the darkened shop, by Karen's order, when the bell outside the closed door tingled, and, on opening it, he saw a tall lady standing there, with her arm round a little figure at her side.

'No business doing to-day, madam ; the mistress is dead—shop closed.'

'I am not come on business at the shop. I have brought home Mistress Charity.'

Tom started back, rubbed his shock of light hair, and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

'You must remember me as Mistress Hope,' the lady said. 'Come, Cherry, let us go upstairs to the parlour.'

But Cherry, trembling, drew back.

'I'm afraid,' she said. 'I am afraid of death.'

'Afraid! Ah! child, it shows how little you have seen of life, for death is ever treading on its heels.

Come!' and putting her arm round Cherry, she drew her upstairs, and, without a word, put her into Penrose's outstretched arms.

Cherry, exhausted and with every feeling overwrought, could only sob on Penrose's breast.

'Mrs Hope,' she exclaimed; 'surely it is Mrs Hope. Oh! I am glad you are come.'

'Glad,' Mrs Hope said, sadly. 'Few will be glad to see me. Kiss me, Penrose. Take care of the child, and I will return, if not to-night, on the morrow. I have something of importance to get through ere nightfall. I may return, and I may not, this evening, but you shall hear of me again. Be tender to the poor little one. She will tell you what has happened. I cannot, for I must hasten away. I will return, though maybe not to-day.'

Mrs Hope did not say another word, but hurried down the stairs and out into Broad Street again. With her cloak closely wrapped round her, and her hood over her face, she escaped notice, for the streets were quieter than usual. Once more at the gate of the Foundling Hospital, she rang for admission. The confusion after the performance of the oratorio in the chapel had subsided now, and the hospital was restored to its usual condition of perfect order. The porter who answered the bell looked doubtfully at the visitor.

‘I desire to see the person in charge of the girls’ department in this hospital.’

The man looked at the clock.

‘It’s too late,’ he said; ‘no one is admitted after six.’

‘My business is urgent; I cannot be again put off. I tried to see one of the governors after the performance this morning. I asked then to see the matron, but I was refused—I will not be refused again.’

The voice was peremptory, and the man hesitated.

‘Well, step into this room, and I will see what I can do for you. Is it about a child you want to see the matron?—because there are new regulations, and the ’ospital is choke-full, not a bed empty.’

‘I shall be obliged to you to do as I ask you,’ was the reply, ‘without further parley.’

‘You be very high and mighty, mistress, and that’s not the way to get a child taken in here, let me tell you.’

Mrs Hope did not vouchsafe any reply to this, but seating herself on one of the chairs in the little bare parlour, clasped her hands tightly together, and set herself to wait with patience till the man returned. It was a long waiting, and the autumn evening was closing in. Everything around her

was very quiet; now and then a footstep was heard in the long corridors, and she started up hoping that someone was coming to whom she could divulge her errand. But the footsteps drew near and then the sound died away again in the distance, and the cold, dreary silence again fell.

‘How long! how long will it be?’ she exclaimed, leaving her seat and pacing to and fro in the dim light. ‘Oh! I cannot bear it much longer. I must ring this bell; they shall not keep me in suspense any longer. How dare they do it! They little know who I am!’ Then, with a burst of passionate emotion she said,—‘If they knew, would it make them more respectful—more ready to do my bidding? Since I saw his face in the crowd to-day, I have felt ready to lie down in the very dust of humiliation. His face! how old he looked, and careworn and grey! and yet he knew me—though I must be changed also, changed past recognition! Will they never come?’ she exclaimed.

She sounded the bell, but it brought no answer, and in despair she was just going out into the corridor from which the little room opened, when a female servant, in the uniform worn by the hospital attendants, met her.

‘I am bidden by Mrs Carter to ask your

business. Children are not received now as formerly until the case is approved by the governors, and after six o'clock the hospital is closed to all strangers.' The woman looked curiously at Mrs Hope, as if she expected that an infant might be concealed under her cloak, and added,—'You had better call again at ten o'clock on the morrow.'

'No, I will not be put off a second time. I tried to obtain an interview with someone in authority here at the close of the oratorio, and as my business is urgent, I insist on your conducting me to the woman in charge of the girls in this hospital.'

'Woman indeed!' the servant said. 'Mrs Carter is as good as you, any day of the week, and,' with a disagreeable toss of her head—'*better*, I'll warrant.'

Although it went sorely against her pride to do so, Mrs Hope put a guinea into the girl's hand.

'Take me to this Mrs Carter at once.'

'Very well, come along with me; but mind you take the blame on yourself if the mistress is angry; it's not my fault if folks will push themselves in when they ain't wanted.'

'I do not choose to bandy words with you any

longer. Show me the way to this Mrs Carter's room.'

Oil lamps were hung at intervals in the passages, and in the dim light they shed, the servant's quick eye caught the shimmer of the diamond in the ring on the hand which grasped the folds of her cloak.

'She is quality, I do believe, but they often gets into scrapes as well as other folk.'

Mrs Carter was a buxom woman, with a face beaming with good-nature. She rose to greet Mrs Hope, saying,—

'It's against rules to see anyone at this hour, and no child can be received under the new regulations; but be seated, madam, and let me hear what I can do for you, though I cannot promise to take in a child. The entries in our books show that every bed is filled.'

Mrs Hope threw off her cloak, and stood before Mrs Carter in all her stately beauty, as she said,—

'I do not ask you to receive a child; on the contrary, I am come to ask to remove one from your care.'

Mrs Carter was struck dumb with astonishment, and stood gazing at the apparition before her with mingled admiration and wonder.

'The child was left, here in March, twelve years

ago ; her token is a locket with a single pearl set in precious stones. The date of her birth was duly entered and the clothes she wore on her entrance were docketed as belonging to her. I now desire to reclaim them with the child, and I wish to know when I can do so.'

'Dear heart !' Mrs Carter exclaimed, raising her hands with a gesture of surprise. 'Dear heart ! You don't mean to say you are come for little Pearl, Mr Handel's pet, who has a voice like an angel, who is—'

'Yes, I am come for her, for I am her mother.'

'Good heavens ! madam, you do not have the air of one who was bound to receive the bounty of the Foundling.'

'I was in a great strait when I did so. It rent my heart to leave my child here, but it was imperative. Now I am free to reclaim her, and I pray you to deliver her over to me at once.'

Mrs Carter shook her head.

'I cannot do so, madam, without the usual forms. The governors meet to-morrow and Mr Handel will be amongst them. That will be the time for you to appear and take the necessary oath that the child is yours and you wish to have her restored to you.'

'Can I see her now? I have waited so long. I

have had a hungry craving to make myself known to her. Two years ago I haunted this place and every Sunday I was in the chapel wondering which of the children was my Pearl, wondering if she saw me gazing up to find her. I dared not then seek her out, for I had no power to take her to my heart. Now I am free, and the man that ruled my destiny is dead, for I am a widow. Say, if you have ever been a mother, you will know what I feel—you will pity me—you will help me.'

Pity her! This beautiful woman in the full vigour and charm of womanhood, in her rich, black gown falling in graceful folds from the waist and not strained over a hoop; a delicate fichu of the finest muslin crossed on her breast and fastened by a jewelled brooch; her shapely arms uncovered to the elbow, where frills of the same muslin fell in close, deep folds. She seemed, in the eye of Mrs Carter, to be far above any need of pity and standing on a vantage ground from which she could look down on common folk.

'Pity me, and let me see my child,' she repeated, 'and let me hear her call me mother.'

'I know not how to say you nay, madam, but the child is by this time a-bed and asleep. She is as good as an angel and has the prettiest ways with her—what with them and her voice, and her sweet-

ness, we never seem to be sorry that she is blind.'

Mrs Hope clasped her hands as if in entreaty.

'Ah, do not say that word—blind—my child blind—never, never to look on her mother's face. It cannot be true.'

'Alas! madam, it is too true. We think she has been blind from her birth.'

'No, no: when I left her here her eyes were lovely—beautiful—like forget-me-nots in hue, with long—ah! such long lashes, marvellous for an infant. No, do not tell me she is blind.'

'The child's eyes look now as you describe them, madame: except that the lids droop and often close unawares, none would deem the eyes beneath were sightless. I told you, madame, Mr Handel has taken special notice of the little Pearl. Her voice first attracted his notice, and now it is the sympathy of a like infirmity, for Mr Handel is quite blind.'

'Never to see my face; never,' Mrs Hope murmured, taking no heed of what Mrs Carter was saying. 'Never to see her mother! Oh! is it true the sins of the fathers are visited on the children? Is my sin visited on my helpless, innocent child?'

Mrs Carter's kindly heart was deeply touched. Hers was no perfunctory duty rendered to the

poor little ones over whom she had to watch, but real and heartfelt service, which often, as in the case of little Pearl, awoke a motherly tenderness in her breast for the little waifs and strays, which the adverse storms of a troublesome world had drifted into this haven of safety.

‘Don’t lose heart, my dear,’ she said, going close to the stricken mother and taking her hand in hers. ‘Don’t lose heart. We’ve all got a Heavenly Father, who is ready to forgive what we have done amiss, if we turn to Him, and He does not willingly afflict us. He knows your past history, my dear, as I cannot; but this I do believe, that you will find comfort in this child, who is, as I say, like one of God’s angels—too good to live, some of us say. I am not one, for I rather think of her as like to bless all about her by her patience and sweet behaviour. I will let you see her, against all rules I know; but, as it falls out, she is sleeping in a small chamber, with only four other children, near my own. I have had her there some time, bless her! and I love to hear her voice singing, like the birds, as day dawns.’

Mrs Carter now took a large bunch of keys from a basket, and, bidding Mrs Hope follow her, she led the way through another corridor to the foot of a flight of stairs. As she went up them she

met one of the nurses who was exchanging night duty with another who was coming behind.

‘Are they asleep in number six?’

‘Yes, madam, so far as I know. The lights are out. Shall I give you this candle?’

Mrs Carter took the tin candlestick, in which a tallow candle flared in the draught, although it was protected by a tin shade, with pierced holes in it, which cast little circles of light around.

The nurse wondered what great lady could be coming to Mrs Carter’s bed-chamber at this time of the evening, but she said nothing, and passed on her way.

Mrs Carter paused at the door of a small room at the end of a long passage, along which the doors of the dormitories opened.

‘This is the chamber,’ she said; ‘you will be quiet, and not awaken the other children, if you please, madam.’

The poor mother did not answer. She followed her guide to the further end of the room, on either side of which the little beds were placed side by side. At the last Mrs Carter paused, and, taking the shade off the candlestick, she whispered,—

‘There she is.’

Pearl lay on her side; one little hand pillowed

her fair cheek, the other was lying on the coverlet. Her hair was short, but little rings of gold lay upon her forehead under the linen cap which all the children wore for sleeping; for young and old, of high and low degree, never went to bed without a night-cap in those days.

‘Oh! my child—my Pearl—my darling! Let me take her in my arms; let me. I must—I must!’

‘Nay, madam, do not awake her.’

But it was too late. Little Pearl was lifted into her mother’s arms, and soft kisses showered upon her face.

‘Oh, my child, forgive me—forgive me. I am your mother. Love me a little, Pearl.’

The child was only partially aroused, but, instead of crying out, as most children would have done, she murmured in gentle tones,—

‘Who is talking to me?’ Then she raised her little hand and felt her mother’s face. ‘Someone is crying,’ she said, for her fingers were wet with her mother’s tears. ‘Don’t cry: I thought you were one of the angels I often see at night, but they never cry, though they come very close to me. I must go to sleep again. Kiss me, whoever you are; I—I can’t see you as I see the angels when they come in dreams. They come

with sounds of music, like Mr Handel's music. Good-night !'

'Say *mother* ; oh ! say *mother*, my Pearl.'

'Mother !' the child repeated, rousing herself again. 'I haven't a mother—I and Marjory and Betty have not had a mother ; girls who have no mothers come here. I'm happy here because of the music, and Mr Handel makes it—such lovely music—I am so sleepy now. Good-night ! good-night !'

'Lay her down, madam. Poor little one, she is a very extraordinary child and often cries out in the night when she has dreams. Lay her down.'

Pearl had fallen asleep, and her mother had no choice but to lay her down again. Then she stood looking at her by the uncertain flickering light of the candle in Mrs Carter's hands.

'She does not know me ; she will never care for me ; it is a bitter trial. Ah ! God help me to bear it. I deserve to suffer, but it is not the less grievous.'

Mrs Carter replaced the shade over the candle, and touching the poor mother's arm she said,—

'Will you come away now ? The other children may awake, madam,' and Mrs Carter going down the room with the light, Mrs Hope was constrained to follow her.

When they had again reached Mrs Carter's room,

Mrs Hope folded her cloak round her, and pulling the hood over her face held out her hand to the matron.

‘I owe you thanks for your kindness. I will return to-morrow and remove my child.’

‘It must be done, madam, by formal application to the governors.’

‘I will make it in person,’ was the reply; then without another word she followed the attendant, who had been waiting, down the stairs and long passage again, till she reached the entrance, and was soon walking quickly away across the wide enclosure before the hospital to the iron gates, over which a dim lamp hung, and in answer to the bell a porter called from the lodge—

‘Who goes there?’

‘A visitor to the matron of the Foundling.’

‘All right! and good-even to you,’ was the reply as Mrs Hope passed out into the street.

London streets were full of pitfalls in the middle of the last century, and it was dangerous to be out in them unprotected. But all unheeding of anything but of the child she had just seen, who could not see her or know her, Mrs Hope went bravely on in the darkness; only one thought in her heart—that she had seen the child who could never see her, who had pierced her soul as with a sharp sword—as she

recalled the words,—‘I’ve no mother ; children that have mothers don’t come here.’

‘No mother!’ Bitter words to greet her ear after years of hungry longing for the child from whom she had separated herself. Only those who know the depth of a mother’s repentant love can understand what the remembrance of these words was to Mrs Hope’s stricken heart.

Suddenly she became aware that two men were following her, and that she was in danger of being robbed by foot-pads. At this moment a chair had deposited a lady at a house where lights were burning in the windows. Two link-boys had just put out their torches and were fitting the cases into the rings which were fastened in the walls of most houses of any pretension for that purpose.

‘Take me to Broad Street, No. 8—quick. Do you hear?’

The chair men hesitated.

‘Will you pay the fare, eh?’

‘Yes, yes ; anything you choose to charge. Hasten, for I am followed ; bid the link-boys kindle their torches and light us on our way.’

A constable now coming up, two dark figures were seen slinking off to the other side of the street, and he asked in a loud voice of the chair men what they were blocking the way for.

Another chair was coming up, and they must move on.

‘Take me in at once,’ Mrs Hope said, in a peremptory tone, ‘and carry me to Broad Street.’

‘What are you waiting for, you scoundrels?’ the constable asked.

‘Will she pay? We don’t pick up folks out of the streets without pay.’

‘Here, take a crown and let us start,’ Mrs Hope said.

And without more ado, the lid of the chair was lifted; she stepped into it, and the next minute she was borne along at the swinging jog trot so familiar to the riders in sedan chairs, which, to the uninitiated, had often the effect of being in a boat in a choppy sea.

There was no further hindrance. The link-boys and the chair men were equally well pleased with the money they earned in this unexpected fashion, and Mrs Hope was deposited at the door of Miss Treherne’s shop just as the clock struck nine—the chair men profuse in their thanks, and as obsequious in their manner as before they had been rude and impertinent.

Then, as now, money had a magic power and smoothed many rough places, and made the journey through life easy, as far as outward things were

concerned. But wealth cannot minister to a mind diseased, or take away the sting from an accusing conscience. Gold was plentiful in Mrs Hope's purse, but what was that when weighed against the sadness of her heart? The longed-for moment, when she should be united to her child, had come, and the words, 'I have no mother,' were ever sounding like a knell in her ears.

CHAPTER XIV

A MEETING

LADY KING and her retinue of attendants arrived in Great Ormond Street in the evening of the day of the performance of 'Samson' at the Foundling Hospital.

Her ladyship was never in a very serene temper on returning to her London house, and she had been upset bodily as well as mentally by a very rough passage to Holyhead in an October gale, which buffeted the little sailing ship like a shuttlecock on the stormy waters, and had kept the passengers close prisoners in the confined space of their cabins, sick and miserable. Two nights at Chester had done something to restore Lady King's bodily health, but the delay the storm had caused had rendered it impossible for her to reach London, as she had intended, in time to be present at the performance of 'Samson.'

The journey from Chester to London had also

been tedious, and the axle-tree of the coach had broken, to say nothing of being set fast in a deep rut, the way blocked by a heap of rubbish, and the falling lame of one of the four horses, which had necessitated a third night on the road.

Tired and out of temper with herself and the world, Lady King led poor Miss O'Brien a sorry life, and made the merry Irish girl, whom she had brought over in the place of Miss O'Connor (who, her matrimonial plans having failed, had retired to her native land despairing of success), wish herself back again in her father's ramshackle castle in County Down.

The housekeeper stood to receive her mistress in the hall, and hoped she had come home in good health.

'No, I have been frightfully ill; that sea voyage is enough to kill one. Pray, O'Brien, don't forget to bring up the black bag at once, or call one of the men to do it. What are you looking like a dying duck for? You weren't near as sick as I was. This is Miss Geraldine de Courcy Beecroft. Let her have Miss O'Connor's room, and call Charity Treherne to make her feel at home.'

'May it please your ladyship,' Mrs Beecroft said, 'Mistress Charity is not here. She left at daybreak this morning.'

‘The notion of it! Where is she gone?’

‘Her aunt lay a-dying and wished to see her, poor soul!’

‘Poor soul, indeed! A cantankerous old creature. What did Charity go for? ’Tis very inconvenient, as I have a rout next week and she must play at it. Well, well, I will see Mr Handel to-morrow. To think I should have missed that performance all from a vile storm. Let supper be served at once, Beecroft, and then to bed. Unpack my goods and chattels, O’Brien, and let me find all in order. Someone see to Miss de Courcy. I depended on Charity Treherne to be here to mind her. Provoking—vastly provoking! O’Brien, you must look to Miss de Courcy’s comfort. She’s an earl’s grand-daughter, mind.’

‘Oh, I can look after my own comfort,’ the girl said. ‘We are obliged to do many things which grand London folk like you never dream of. Here,’ she said with impulsive Irish kindness, ‘here, I am better able to carry that great bundle than you are, Miss O’Brien,’ and Geraldine took up the heavy parcel and tripped up the wide staircase with it with light, quick steps.

Lady King was too much occupied with her own concerns to think much of Charity that evening, and the next day her first thought was

to see Handel and find out the real condition of his eyes. She ordered the chariot round by eleven o'clock, and bidding her new *protégée* get ready to accompany her, she said she would take her with her to see the greatest man in London or in Europe—the blind composer whose works had now a world-wide fame.

When Lady King's carriage drew up in Brook Street, the footman came to the door and said,—

‘Mr Handel is coming along the street, my lady.’

‘Help me out at once,’ Lady King exclaimed, ‘I must go and meet him.’

Handel had been, as was his custom in his latter years, to morning prayer at the parish church—St George's, Hanover Square. He advanced slowly, leaning on the arm of Christopher Smith, and Lady King, who had not seen him for some months, was struck with the change in him. He walked with the uncertain step of the blind, his head thrown back, his sightless eyes raised—the particular form of blindness, known then as *gutta serena*, for which there had been no cure, though he had undergone more than one operation, did not affect the appearance of the eyes themselves, and this might have deceived any casual observer who met him unawares.

Lady King sprang towards him.

‘My dear sir; my dear Mr Handel, do you not know me?’

‘Ah! it is my Lady King come back from Ireland, is it? And, I would fain hope, not to return. Welcome, my lady. We are just at my door—show us the way to my parlour, Smith, and if any chance to be waiting to see me, bid them depart, for I have to meet the governors of the Foundling at noon to-day at the hospital. Who have you with you—I heard her speak—it is not Charity Treherne.’

‘Nay; it is a dear Irish girl who is come to see London, and to hear the music which she loves—composed by the greatest man in Europe. Come hither, Geraldine, and kiss Mr Handel’s hand.’

With a merry laugh the girl obeyed, and saying,—

‘Sir, I scarce know one tune from another, but I am proud to pay my respects to you.’

‘Honest! honest!’ Handel said, as he held out his hand to the girl. ‘It were well if all folk were as honest as you are. I met a good old friend of mine one evening in Marylebone Gardens, and asked his opinion of a piece which the band had just played. He said, “It’s very poor stuff;” and I answered, “You are right, it is very poor stuff; I thought so myself when I had finished it.”



THE MARYLEBONE GARDENS.

He began to beg my pardon, but I stopped him, for his opinion was as correct as it was honest. But there are scores who, as you say, know not one tune from another, who besiege the place for tickets to hear my oratorios, when they would be far sooner dancing a jig at a ball. Come in, come in. I have yet half-an-hour before I start. I cannot say,' he said, with a sigh, as he sank into his chair—'I cannot say I am glad to see you, for I shall never look on the face of a friend or foe again. It is all darkness. "Sun, moon and stars are dark to me." Do you know these words, young lady?'

'Nay, sir,' the girl said, touched by the infinite pathos in Handel's voice.

'Then you shall hear them wedded to music. The words written by one blind man, the music by another. Strange combination—strange yet true.' The pathetic mood did not last. Handel began to joke and bandy words with Lady King, asking after many people in Ireland whom he had known, and recalling, in an extraordinary way, the little peculiarities of manner or speech which had fastened on his astonishingly tenacious memory. 'It is well for me, my lady, that I can recall the faces and appearances of those I shall never see again. Lord! I laugh now when I see the wrinkled face of the old duchess who was turned

away from a concert in Dublin because hoops were forbidden. They called me to come and settle the matter, as her graceless grace swore she would force an entrance. How the feathers in her turban nodded, and how she ranted and stormed. Her hoop she vowed she would wear, and hear the music too. I was put to it, I warrant, for her grace was mightily thought of in Dublin, and had taken a score of tickets at a time when, as you know, my lady's money was not plentiful with your humble servant. But I held my own, and her grace was conducted to a side chamber, where a waiting woman helped her to slide off the hoop, and she appeared in the front seat the size of a scarecrow instead of a feather bed. Ah! I was a younger man then. I don't know that I could haggle with a duchess now. Tell me, my lady, how you find little Mistress Treherne. She is beset with a suitor, and, poor little one, much distressed.'

'Indeed, sir, when I came home yester evening, I found her flown. The old aunt, when dying, repented of her hardness to her and sent for her—so my housekeeper tells me. It is vastly inconvenient, for I hope to have a musical rout next week.'

'Poor child!' Handel repeated in the softened tone, with which he always spoke of the young and the helpless. 'She has a true musician's soul—but

no voice. I never let her use it; her chest is weak. The violin satisfies her, and many a time, though hidden away in a remote part of the orchestra, I hear her true notes sounding. Women-folk are not supposed to play the fiddle, and some performers have dared to jeer at her—once, not oftener, for I stop their mouths fast enough; but I order her into the background, and Smith sees that she is unobserved. I hope you will see her, my lady, and inquire as to this troublesome suitor. And now I must beg you to excuse me. I hear the chariot come round. I am forced to hire one nowadays, for I walk but slowly, and cannot always have my good Christopher to guide me.'

'I would have driven you gladly, sir, to the Foundling. I like not the notion of a hired vehicle for you.'

'Tut! tut! my lady, a hired coach suffices.'

'You will dine and sup with me on the morrow, sir. Do not refuse me.'

'I will get Smith to look at my list of engagements, and send a messenger with ay or no before night. Now we must be off. I dine to-day with the governors of the Foundling. I am to hear what were yesterday's profits. Adieu! adieu! my lady, and adieu to the young gentlewoman who had the honesty to say she did not know one tune from another.'

The governors of the Foundling held a preliminary meeting on these occasions for the transaction of business, hearing complaints from the officials, reports of the health of the children, and other matters of a like kind. When Handel arrived there was a general buzz of greeting, and everyone was anxious to be the first to meet him and lead him to a chair at the table. The profits arising from the performance of 'Samson' were very large, and it was no wonder that the benefactor of the hospital should be received with warmth. A minute was entered in a book stating the large sum, now amounting to seven thousand pounds, which, by the benevolence of Mr George Frederick Handel, had swelled the funds of the institution. And when the clerk read it, a cheer broke forth from those assembled.

'You do me great honour, gentlemen,' Handel said. 'I can no longer see your faces, but I know that they shine with good will towards me. While I live I shall continue to give performances for the maintenance of the children who find a refuge in these walls. God bless them! they stand in need of friends, and here they find them.'

'A gentlewoman is waiting for an audience,' the secretary said. 'She has been in the porter's room below for two hours. Will your honours grant her a hearing?'

‘We do not pledge ourselves to hear complaints at this board,’ the chairman said, ‘and persons wishing to have one of the foundlings for servants or apprentices must attend the meeting of the acting committee.’

‘I do not think, your honour, that the gentleman is come to lodge any complaint. I take it she is desirous of removing a child.’

‘Oh! let her come up, sir,’ Handel said.

‘It is unusual, but—’

And now voices were heard in the corridor outside, and it was evident someone was seeking admission. All eyes were turned to the door as Mrs Carter, the matron of the girls’ wards, making a low curtsy, begged permission to introduce a lady whose child had been in the hospital for twelve years, and who was desirous of tendering her thanks to their honours. The lady now advanced to the table, and letting the hood of her cloak fall back, she stood before the committee in all her stately beauty.

‘I am come,’ she said, gentlemen, ‘to tender my grateful thanks for the twelve years’ nurture my child has had within these walls; nay, more, I am able to offer you what, when I brought her hither, I did not possess. Be so good as to place these to the account of the hospital,’ and a packet of bank notes was laid on the table.

‘My child,’ she continued, ‘has, I hear, won all hearts. She is blind, and will never look on her mother’s face.’

‘Blind—blind do you say, madam,’ Handel exclaimed, striking his hand on the table, ‘then it is little Pearl you speak of?’

‘Yes, sir, it is little Pearl,’ Mrs Carter said, ‘and I have requested the token with the garments she wore, to be brought for your honours to inspect.’

‘Bring the child, woman,’ Handel said; ‘let those who have eyes see her ere she departs, and hear her voice, which is music in the ear.’

The lady turned quickly to Handel.

‘Ah, good sir, you have been kind to my little one. Heaven bless and reward you!’

‘We are fellow-sufferers, madam. The gift of sight denied, maybe the gift of hearing is quickened. That child’s voice has thrilled through my soul many a time and oft.’

‘Be seated, madam,’ the chairman said; ‘there may be some delay in fetching the child and her token.’

‘I prefer to stand, sir,’ was the reply, with a stately inclination of her head, while her eyes were fixed on the door.

At last it opened, and little Pearl, led by the kind hand of the matron, came up the room. With a strong effort at self-control, her mother did not

advance to meet her, or make any sign of what she felt, except by her quick-coming breath and sudden pressing of her hand to her side. Pearl's sightless eyes were open, and a smile was on her sweet face.

'This is the child, gentlemen,' Mrs Carter said, 'and this box contains her token and clothes. The ticket attached to the locket states her age. She was under two months when she was received into the hospital.'

'And this is your child, madam?' the chairman asked, addressing the mother.

'Yes; she is my child.'

'And you wish to remove her?'

'Yes.'

'You must be so good as to sign a paper the clerk will hand you, with your name in full, when you placed the child here, and,' with some hesitation, 'your present name. The value of this token must be considerable, pardon me for saying it seems extraordinary that you should have committed your child to the care of this charity, when you possessed anything of such high value as this locket.'

The locket was handed round and examined with curious eyes, and then the little garments, yellow with age, were unrolled. At the sight of them, the mother's courage and self-possession failed. She uttered a cry, and said,—

‘I cannot bear it.’

‘Dear lady!’ it was Handel who spoke, ‘think no more of the past, but hope for the future.’

And now little Pearl spoke for the first time. She had clung to the matron’s hand, and stood wondering at what she heard passing around her.

‘Ah! that is Mr Handel’s voice,’ she exclaimed.

‘*Komm, liebes Kindchen,*’ breaking out into German, as he always did when greatly moved, ‘*komm zu dem alten Blinden.*’

Pearl held out her hands, and the great master took them and pressed them to his lips.

‘*Liebes Kindchen,*’ he repeated; then resuming his accustomed manner, and hearing the mother’s cry, ‘Pearl, will you not come to your mother?’ he let the little hands free, saying,—‘Yes, yes, go to your mother, child.’

Perhaps the full bitterness of her position had never been more keenly felt than when Pearl said,—

‘My mother, sir; I have no mother. Goody Carter is my mother.’

‘No, no, my dear, this fine lady is your mother; go to her at once, Pearl. She will take you away to a beautiful house, I daresay.’

‘I don’t want to go. I like to stay here with

you, Goody, and sing in chapel, and hear Mr Handel's music.'

'Bid the child be quiet,' one of the governors said. 'We have no time to spend on a wayward child. Now, madam, here is the form, the clerk is waiting for your signature.'

The clerk laid the paper before the poor mother. She took the quill with her fair, white hand, and the clerk pointed out the blank space.

'Your former name here, madam. I have filled in the date of the child's admission, with other particulars, and you will please to sign your present name below, where I have entered the date of the child's leaving the hospital by your desire.'

'My name! my name! How can I write my name—my old name?'

'Come, madam,' the chairman said sharply, 'we have other business on hand, and the dinner hour draws on.'

The trembling fingers delayed no longer, and the quill moved slowly over the paper as Margaret Heneage was written on it.

'Now, your present name here.'

There was another pause, and then swiftly, and in bold, decided characters was written 'Margherita, Contessa di Pergolesi.'

No remark was made; the clerk sprinkled the

parchment with sand, and the chairman said, in his cold, official voice,—

‘We need not detain you, madam, the necessary form is complete.’

Like one in a dream, the mother turned away, and going up to little Pearl said,—

‘Bid these gentlemen a good morning, Pearl, for you are coming away with your mother.’

The child made no further resistance, though her sightless eyes were full of tears, and her breast heaved with suppressed sobs.

‘Hearken, madam,’ Handel said, ‘I must see that child again. Ah, *mein Gott*, what do I say? I cannot see her; but bring her to my house in Brook Street, and let me serve you, if you need service.’

‘I thank you, sir, for your kind words; I will wait on you ere I leave London,’ and then, with a curtsy and a graceful inclination of her head, Pearl’s mother left the room.

Mrs Carter had taken charge of the locket and clothes, or they would have been left on the table.

Pearl still clung to Mrs Carter’s hand, and with low sobs said,—

‘I wish to stay with Goody Carter. I don’t like to go away with the lady.’

‘Now, Pearl,’ the kind matron said, ‘you don’t

know what you are saying. The beautiful lady is your own mother, child, and she will love you, and care for you, and most like will take you to a grand house, and a garden full of sweet flowers, such as you love to smell and handle, and where the birds sing all day, and you will have pretty frocks and lace caps, and aprons and—'

'Nay, nay,' the poor mother said, 'do not try to bribe her to love me. I have a chair waiting. I will return for her later in the day; by that time she may have become more reconciled. Poor little one! oh, poor little one! she is filling her mother's cup of remorse to overflowing.'

Yes, that cup was full—too full for tears—and as Margaret was borne away in the sedan chair, the cry of her heart was ever,—

'I pierced my mother's soul with anguish. I left her to sorrow for me in bitterness of soul, and now—now—my own child will have none of me. God help me! God help me!'

CHAPTER XV

HER STORY

SIR GODFREY STUART was at the shop in Broad Street by noon the next day. He had seen Margaret lead away Charity Treherne, and secure that he had found a clue to guide him, he was surprised to find the shop in Broad Street closed. On ringing the bell, Tom answered it.

‘Can I see Mistress Treherne?’

‘She is dead,’ was the reply. ‘She lies dead upstairs.’

‘I would fain see Mistress Penrose Treherne.’

Tom shook his head.

‘She is a-bed, asleep. She was worn out.’

‘Is her sister here?’

Tom nodded assent, but showed no sign of inviting Sir Godfrey to enter the shop.

He was not to be discouraged.

‘Can you tell me at what time Mistress Charity arrived here yesterday?’

Tom rubbed his forehead, as if to quicken his dull wits, and replied,—

‘I fetched her here at daybreak yester morning. The old mistress wanted to see her before she died. Then she went to the Foundling to the music, and then—’

‘I know all that,’ Sir Godfrey said, getting impatient at Tom’s slow speech. ‘Can’t you go on quicker, boy?’

‘Well, a lady brought her here in a bad way. She fell into a swoon, and Karen could scarce bring her back.’

‘Karen. Ah! that’s the old maid-servant. Send her to speak to me.’

Karen, hearing voices at the door, now came with a severe reprimand to Tom, and said in a hoarse whisper,—

‘Standing chattering there, with such trouble in the house. I declare I could box your ears for you, and serve you right. Shut the door, I tell you.’

Sir Godfrey now tried to pass Tom, and his voice made Karen think she had heard it before.

‘Who is it?’ she said, in the sepulchral whisper which she thought appropriate to the occasion, when, as she would have expressed it, ‘a corpse lay in the house,’ for those were the days when darkness

and gloom and hushed steps and low voices were considered appropriate in the house of mourning. 'Who is it?'

'It is I, Sir Godfrey Stuart. Can I have speech with you, Mistress Karen, for a short space?'

'Dear heart! Sir, I beg your pardon. I had no notion it was anyone of quality standing there. We are in great trouble. Step inside—into the parlour, if you please. Shut the door, Tom.'

Sir Godfrey stumbled through the little shop, which, lighted by only two rays of the noonday sun coming through the small, heart-shaped holes in the shutters, was no easy matter.

The little parlour behind—where the iron chest in which Miss Prudence kept safe, under double locks and padlocks, the silver and jewellery which were left to her care, was scarcely lighter than the shop. But Karen cautiously opened a chink of the shutter, and stood, with her bare arms folded, to listen to what Sir Godfrey had to say. Her cap, with many frills, shaded her face, and deepened the furrows which time had left there.

'What is your pleasure, sir?' she asked. 'If you have properties in yon chest they are safe, and will be delivered up as soon as poor Miss Penrose can see to business. All things are left to her, as they ought to be. But you can't see her now.

They are both asleep, poor lambs ! and I hope they'll sleep on for a bit. Poor Miss Cherry was took so bad last evening we had to get the doctor. He let blood, and she is very weak this morning'

'This is bad news,' Sir Godfrey said ; 'but, my good woman, my errand is chiefly to inquire about the lady who brought Miss Charity Treherne here yesterday.'

'Twas Mistress Hope—who once upon a time took up her quarters here—worse luck ! We were all peaceable like till she came with her singing and her fiddling. I always mistrusted her, and—'

'I do not want to hear your opinion of Mrs Hope ; all I want is to ask if you know where I can find her.'

'Oh ! is that it, sir ? Well, then, I can tell you nought about her. She was a sly one, and would go off nobody knew where. She called herself by some outlandish name, and bewitched the young ones, but she never got round me nor my poor dead mistress. I did hear tell that she was going to Brook Street, but as to the number I didn't hear that. Don't Mr Handel live in Brook Street ? I've heard her talking about him scores of times. She was music mad—you might hear of her there.'

'But she will surely return here to-day to inquire for Miss Charity ?'

‘She may and she mayn’t; I put no trust in her. My mistress was one of few words, but she said to me, says she, “Karen, I don’t hold with mysteries,” and Madam Hope is a mystery.’

Sir Godfrey felt greatly at a loss. He saw nothing more could be got out of old Karen; and bidding her make his respects to Mistress Penrose and Mistress Charity, he set out again, uncertain what steps to take. He went in the direction of Brook Street, with some vague hope that Mr Handel might be able to give him some intelligence; but when he stopped before the house he met a servant coming out with a bundle of music papers in his hand, and on asking if Mr Handel was at home he was answered in the negative.

‘Mr Handel is at the Foundling Hospital, sir.’

‘When is he likely to return?’

‘Not till the afternoon, or maybe supper-time. Shall I deliver any message?’

‘No, I will call again,’ was the reply; and Sir Godfrey walked restlessly up and down Brook Street for some time.

Then he remembered that Lady King might be in London. He had heard she was returning to Great Ormond Street, and he walked in that direction.

Lady King's chariot was drawing up at her door when he reached it. She showed great pleasure on seeing Sir Godfrey, rallied him on his grave looks, and inquired for his charge, young Heneage.

'He is at this moment at St Crispin's with his mother.'

Lady King held up her hands in astonishment. 'Sown his wild oats, eh? Well, all thanks to you. I had some trouble with him about Cherry Treherne last season; but I hope he has given up the goose chase now. The girl is a good girl—I will say that for her; and though some dozen idle fellows tried to win her favour, she kept them at a distance. Now the old aunt is dying, and she is gone to her, more's the pity. She must return next week. I find her music amuses folks; and my parties last year were attended by many distinguished people. I had royal guests more than once—think of that! No doubt Mr Handel drew them. He is more wonderful now he is blind than when he had his eyesight. Well, stay and dine. Here's a pretty little lass from my own country to make you merry. You should not look so doleful, Sir Sober Face. I always keep up my spirits, storm or calm, rain or shine, and if you do nought but fold your hands

and stare at your sorrows, faith! they grow bigger.'

Sir Godfrey felt very little inclined to stay to dinner, but he was tired and hungry; and trying to shake off his depression, he sat down to Lady King's hospitable board and listened to Geraldine de Courcy's merry chatter with some amusement.

Several other guests dropped in. Lady King was known to welcome her friends at any time; and she also liked to hear all the gossip of the town after a long absence.

The two men who were now ready to gratify her curiosity were of the type which at the present day gather stories current at the clubs, and rehearse them with additions. They knew Sir Godfrey, but restrained themselves in his presence; but when, soon after coffee had been served, he took his leave of Lady King, to set out again on his quest, they talked more freely, and, as birds of the air carry a matter, Lady King was told that Jasper Heneage had been seen trying to force a young lady into a coach and four, and that Sir Godfrey had interfered to prevent it.

Lady King was all curiosity, and when one of these worthies suggested that the young lady was

the divine musician Mistress Treherne, she gave the report a flat denial.

‘She is with a dying relative, sir, so you are wrong this time. Forsooth, I am rather pleased to hear from Sir Godfrey that young Heneage is with his good mother at St Crispin’s. There is much in him to like, and I hope he and Charity Treherne may come to an understanding. But she is a proud little miss, and because her aunt kept a shop in Broad Street, she won’t be looked down upon, and having got it into her head that Madame Heneage would scorn her for her son’s wife, she wouldn’t have aught to say to him.’

Then dismissing Charity and all her concerns, Lady King began to talk of other matters, and angle for gossip and scandal, with which her two guests were only too willing to gratify her.

When Mrs Hope, or, as she must now be called, Signora Pergolesi, left the Foundling, she returned to the house in Brook Street where she had taken rooms, and summoning her servant, a dark-eyed Italian woman, she bid her accompany her to a draper’s and silk mercer’s shop in Bond Street in a hackney coach, where she could buy materials for her child’s dress—white taffeta shot with blue, flowered chintzes; lace caps and kerchiefs; aprons

with dainty pockets and garnished with ribands, silk stockings and tiny shoes with red heels, and rosettes with buckles—all were bought with no regard to expense.

‘See, Assunta,’ she said, ‘you must be busy with your needle and get all these things ready for my little daughter.’

Assunta shrugged her shoulders and lifted her large brown hands in amazement.

‘Per Bacco! Sarebbe travaglio d’un anno.’

‘No, no; we will call in help. Tell me of a mantua maker,’ she said, addressing the shopman.

‘We can supply one of our own workwomen. When does your ladyship require her services?’

‘Immediately. Let her come now to 19 Brook Street in the hackney coach.’

The man glanced at the clock.

‘It is late in the day, madam. We will send our workwoman as you desire early on the morrow.’ And he added,—‘It would be needful for her to see the young gentlewoman for whom the gowns are to be made.’

‘Very well. Pack the articles I have bought into the coach,’ and taking out a long, crimson silk purse filled with guineas, she said, ‘Make out the bill for Madame the Contessa di Pergolesi, and I will pay at once.’

The man was all obsequious courtesy, feeling he had secured an excellent customer. The ladies who frequented his extensive stores were not accustomed to pay for their wares on the spot. Then, as now, the members of fashionable society were often dressed in their smart clothes on credit.

Signora Pergolesi deposited the large parcels of goods at the house with Assunta, and then was about to return to the Foundling when Sir Godfrey Stuart came up. He had returned to Brook Street hoping that he might get at Handel's house some tidings of her he so anxiously sought.

'May I crave permission to speak to you, Margaret?'

'Ah! don't call me Margaret,' she said in a sharp voice as of one in pain. 'Anything, anything but that. No, I am on my way to fulfil an important engagement. I cannot stop. It gets late. Do not detain me.'

'For your mother's sake I must do so,' Sir Godfrey said firmly. 'We cannot stand here in the street; it will attract notice. Allow me to enter the house, if only for five minutes.'

'It must only be for five minutes,' she said. Then to a servant,—'Bid the coachman wait my pleasure.'

Then she led the way into the wide hall, and opened a door on the right-hand side. Assunta was there, surrounded with the parcels, some of which were opened, and she was fingering their contents with evident satisfaction.

‘Leave the room, Assunta mia,’ her mistress said, in a gentle voice. ‘I have business with this gentleman.’

Assunta nodded her head till the bright pins, stuck in her raven hair, jingled against the little chains which fastened them, then with a smile which showed a row of ivory teeth, and kissing her hand to her mistress, she departed, much wondering, but obedient, as always, to orders.

‘She is a faithful creature,’ her mistress said, ‘and has served me well.’

Evidently she tried to speak in an ordinary voice, but it was an effort. Her lips trembled and Sir Godfrey could see that she was trying hard to suppress her emotion. He, too, felt that he must put restraint on himself, and do his best to be calm.

‘You speak of my mother,’ Margaret began,—‘she cannot desire news of me?’

‘On the contrary, she desires before all things to see you. As you know, I met you unawares. I hastened to St Crispin’s to relieve the anxiety

of years, and she bid me find you, and assure you that she hungered to see you, and to forgive you for causing her all those long years of pain and racking, anxious fears on your account.'

'Are you sure? Can she love me still? I think—I think I should have come to her in a sore strait when I was all but penniless, but I I was afraid. I dared not tell her my story then; I can scarce dare to tell it now.'

'You need not be afraid; you are secure of forgiveness—quite sure.'

'Godfrey,' Margaret said, in a low voice, covering her face with her hands, 'Godfrey, I have a child, a darling blind child. God has visited my sin on her. The innocent suffers for the guilty. The guileless child for the guileful mother.'

There was a pause, and then she raised her head, and meeting Sir Godfrey's sorrowful, pitying gaze, where the old love he had felt for her in past years struggled to re-assert its power, she said,—

'I will tell you my story. You will depise me; you will hate me; but I will tell it, and when you shrink from me, I will take it as a part of my punishment.'

Sir Godfrey bowed his head, and then, turning

away his eyes from that beautiful face, which bore the traces of a storm-tossed life, he said,—

‘I am listening—let me hear. I shall not hate you, Margaret—Margaret!’

‘You know,’ she began, ‘I was courted for my singing—that I lived for music, and that I had instruction from an Italian, who was in high favour at St James’s, and taught several of the Royal Family to sing. I thought I loved him—fool that I was. I went through a form of marriage with him by a Romish priest, and he being under a cloud caused by debt, of which I knew not, we left England the same day and went to Milan. There he made use of my voice at La Scala, where I was a success, and after six months had passed, I learned from the lips of a woman that she was his lawful wife and I—you know what I was! I would not stay one hour after I knew the truth, but gathering together all I possessed, I made my way to England. I lived on the sale of trinkets and jewels which had been given me by those who adored not me but my voice, and in a humble house in London my child, my Pearl, was born. Amongst those who had followed me with admiration and turned my head with flattery, was a Conte di Pergolesi. He was older than I was by a score of years, but he

was—yes, he was good and meant to serve me. He came to London and sought me out when I had but one jewel left, and he offered me marriage on one sole condition—that I would give up my child and look on her face no more. I entreated him to have pity on me, but he was obdurate. I saw no way of supporting myself and my babe—my voice had failed. I had only that to depend on, so I consented. The good woman with whom I had lived, and who knew my story, bid me leave the child at the Foundling Hospital, and I did it. Ah! you may well turn away from me, but, Godfrey, I have had my punishment—a bitter one. My child, whom I deserted and left to strangers, turns from me as you do!’

‘Nay, Margaret, you judge me too hardly; infinite pity fills my heart for you.’

‘Do not speak like that, or I shall not be able to finish. Pity! pity! I can scarce bear it from you. Well, I left my babe with the last jewel I had unsold, tied round her neck. She had finely-wrought clothes; I had spent money on them and denied myself food. I have seen them to-day; I have seen her, my angel, my blind child, and, Godfrey, she would fain stay at the Foundling rather than come to her mother. Now tell me have I not reaped, as I have sown, a full measure

of bitterness.' Sir Godfrey did not speak, and Pearl's mother went on. 'The Conte di Pergolesi married me, by special licence, at a church at Southampton, whence we embarked. He was strictly honourable and he rescued me from misery, but he never relented about my child. He never suffered me to speak of her, or of my past, for many years. He loaded me with jewels and fine things. We lived in a palace on the slope of the hill, which leads up to Fiesole from Florence. It was a secluded life, but the beauty of the fair city, though it delighted me, never, never satisfied me. There was ever an aching void, a sense of shame, and thoughts of my mother and of my child. Two years ago or more my husband was called away to Sicily, where he had estates of mulberry trees, whence as a silk grower, much of his fortune was made. I can never forget that in answer to my entreaties, made on my knees, he suffered me to come to London under the strict, solemn vow that I would make myself incognita, and if I looked at my child, I would not approach her. I made the vow and I kept it. I brought with me many valuable jewels, and hearing of Miss Treherne's shop, and that she kept such articles in trust for those who wanted money advanced on them, I committed them to her care.

Being absolutely alone and unknown, I asked Miss Treherne to let me lodge with her—thus my knowledge of sweet Charity Treherne. I remained three months under that roof, and went every Sunday to the Foundling to see, or try to see, my child. But I kept the vow I made, and never made myself known. Ah! with what hungry eyes I would scan the lines of those children, all alike in brown stuff frocks and white caps—all alike. Yet one was mine. I was always fancying I knew her, and once, when I heard her voice in the playground as I stood gazing in at the gate, I was sure I knew her; and I hungered for my mother, too, and a sight of her. I walked through St James's Park, and went to the opera and Vauxhall, hoping I might chance to look on her; but I never did. Once I saw *you*. You were close to me, in a crowd, but my vow kept me silent, and I let you pass me by. I returned to Florence, and my husband, from that day, treated me with even greater consideration. I have thought, had he lived, he would have relented about my child, but he died three months ago, and he has left me his whole possessions. They are very large, but, oh! what are they to me? The love of my child would be a thousand times more precious, and maybe I shall never, never have it, and she will never see

her mother's face. Ah, Godfrey, the words are true. I seem to hear them sounding ever in my ears—"As a man soweth, so shall he also reap." That is my story, without reserve, and now—'

'Now you must go to your mother, and take with you your child. The love you crave awaits you there. You must go and bless one who loves you better than life, with your presence.'

'Not now, not now. I am to fetch my child from the hospital. I left her while I went to purchase all these things, which she will never see or care for, but which she must wear. Let me see her dressed as becomes my mother's grandchild before I take her to her. Give me a few days' grace.'

'Every hour adds to the pain of waiting. Your mother, knowing I have seen you, will not sleep or rest till she has seen you also. Let me take you to her without delay.'

'Godfrey,' Margaret said, 'do not deem me ungracious; but—but I would fain see my mother alone. Let me go to her alone—not with anyone near when we meet.'

'Jasper is at St Crispin's—your brother, whom you saw yesterday.'

'My brother! Was that man Jasper? He is a boy—I thought he was a boy.'

‘You forget the changes that thirteen years make. Jasper was a child when you left home.’

‘Ah! and he is a man now, and you and I, Godfrey, we too are changed. I look back and see a young, happy girl running down the lime avenue to meet you, and I say that was another Margaret—*she* was glad and joyous. I have no likeness left to her, and you— Ah, Godfrey, you too are changed; but I know you have wife and children to love you, while I—’

Sir Godfrey smote his hands together. The sorrow and remorse of this beautiful woman before him—his betrothed wife—pierced his noble heart as he looked at her.

‘No,’ he said, ‘no; I have neither wife nor child. God denied me these gifts, and I submit to His will.’ Then recovering himself he said,— ‘Let us arrange matters. Tell me when you will go to your mother’s house.’

‘Be patient with me. I *will* go, and soon; but I would fain go alone. Many is the time I have thought of the day when I would creep slowly under the lime trees, and entering the old house, pray for forgiveness. The day is coming, but I wish for no witnesses—none.’

‘Be it so,’ Sir Godfrey said. ‘It may be best.’

‘I shall tell my story, as I have told it to you,

to my mother; but, till I tell it, I pray you to keep silence.'

'I will obey you in all things,' was the reply, and then he turned to leave her, lost to him so long, but, could he say, found now?

Sir Godfrey's heart was heavy within him as he went to his chambers, feeling the full weight of his solitary life as he had never felt it before.

CHAPTER XVI

MOTHER AND CHILD

‘PENROSE!’

‘Yes, Cherry. Are you awake? You must take a sup of wine.’

‘No,’ and Cherry turned away her head. ‘How long have I been here, in our old room?’

‘More than a week, dear.’

‘Have I? Is Aunt Prudence buried?’

‘Oh, yes! two days ago.’

‘Have I been dreaming, Penrose, or did I see Mrs Hope?’

‘It was not a dream. She came and stood by you and kissed you.’

‘Ah! I am glad it was not a dream.’

‘When you get well, Cherry, you are to be taken to St Crispin’s. Madame Heneage would fain see you.’

‘I don’t want to go,’ Cherry said, and tears

rolled down her cheeks. 'I want to stay with you, Penrose.'

'Oh, not always, dear, not always. You will like to live in a beautiful house.'

'I don't care about beautiful things now, only I should like to hear someone sing. Penrose, I think I must have heard the angels singing one day.'

'You heard Mrs Hope, dear, and little Pearl.'

'Little Pearl, the Foundling child?'

'Yes. They came here and sang Mr Handel's song, "Come unto Me, and I will give you Rest."''

'Ah! I knew I had heard it. Where is Mrs Hope?'

'She is going to St Crispin's to-day. It was yesterday she was here, and when you are well you are to go to her.'

Cherry seemed too weak to ask further questions. She sighed and closed her eyes again. Penrose feared, in her weakened condition, to tell her the Speranza of other days, who had lived so contentedly in their homely manner of life, was really a grand lady, a countess, and, more astonishing still, the blind child's mother.

Cherry had been so ill that for several days old Karen went about the silent house declaring that

she would soon be buried in her poor aunt's grave. Even now Cherry seemed to have no power to rally, and the treatment of the doctor who had let blood, according to the fashion of the day, when she lay in that deadly swoon, had done its best to destroy what little strength might be left. It was something, however, that Charity had asked any voluntary question; and Penrose felt a spring of hope in her heart as she smoothed Charity's hair from her forehead, and raising her head, held a cordial to her lips.

Lady King had not been unmindful of her, and baskets of wine and nourishing dainties had been brought daily from Great Ormond Street. Indeed, had Lady King wished to forget Charity, Mr Handel would not have allowed her to do so. He was full of anxiety for his little musician, and he had himself called in his coach to ask for her, while going daily to Lady King's. He would lament over her condition, and beg her ladyship to get some better doctor to see her.

Penrose was called from Charity's bedside by Karen. She made signs at the door, and indulged in so many curious contortions of her mouth, without uttering a word, that Penrose went up to her, asking,—

‘Is it Mrs Blake?’

‘No. *He* is below—the young spark who tried to carry her off. He wants to see her.’

Penrose looked back anxiously at the bed, but Charity lay with closed eyes, and evidently had not heard Karen’s voice. Penrose signed to Karen to take her place by Cherry’s side, and then went to have the interview which she dreaded.

Jasper Heneage came towards her with the courtly bow he knew so well how to make. On his face were traces of real feeling as he said,—

‘Madam, I pray you to let me see Mistress Charity.’

‘Nay, sir, it is impossible; my sister lies in so weak a state that all excitement is forbidden.’

‘You know how I love her, how I worship her, how—’

Penrose held up her hand and interrupted him.

‘It was an ill-chosen way of showing your love, sir, to force her to enter a chariot against her will, on a day when she had gone through much trouble. Nay, sir, love that is worthy the name has no thought of self.’

‘You are hard—I may say cruel, to me, madam. I have been steadfast in my devotion to your sister for years. The hindrance she felt in accepting me as her suitor is removed. My mother is

ready to receive her; she has relented, and not one word will ever be said which might jar on the sensitive nature of your sister, with regard to the difference in social rank.'

A bright crimson rose to Penrose's usually pale cheeks.

'Cherry's sister will be a tradeswoman, sir, henceforth. The difference of rank of which you speak will never separate her from me, at least if I know Cherry, it will not.'

Jasper Heneage had never before felt so humbled. He had made a merit of his unfaltering attachment to Charity. He had satisfied even Sir Godfrey Stuart by his steadier conduct, and he really thought that if he had Charity for his wife, he would do his duty at St Crispin's, and take his place as a country gentleman, a Justice of the Peace, and a good landlord.

He hoped he should have won praise from Charity's sister; he thought she would have acknowledged what a grand match it would be for her, and that she would have shown a due sense of the exalted position to which he was willing to raise Charity Treherne. Instead, he was met with dignified coldness, and it irritated him to be told that it was an ill-chosen way of showing his love for Cherry, to attempt to carry her off against her will.

These escapades were common enough, he thought; it only showed Penrose was ignorant of the ways of the world, by feeling aggrieved with him on that ground.

‘My intentions towards your sister, madam, were honourable. I only desired to take her to my mother’s care, and so make all due arrangements for our marriage; but I see it is vain to win your good opinion. You are obdurate; but at least let me see her.’

‘I dare not comply with your request. Any shock to her, any excitement, would throw her into a fit of weeping.’

‘What can I do, madam, to show you how I love your sister? It is hard to be thwarted at every turn. Let me look at her’—Jasper’s voice trembled—‘I will not speak—I swear I will not speak nor make any sign of what I feel. I swear it.’

But Penrose was firm.

‘When the physician gives leave I will let you hear from me, sir; till then I must bid you good-day, for I must return to my sister.’

Jasper took his dismissal with as good a grace as he could, and saying, ‘Make her my dutiful respects and assurances of undying devotion,’ he turned and left the parlour.

There are some natures on which opposition and denial act as a stimulus. Jasper Heneage left Broad Street more determined than ever to secure Charity Treherne for his wife, more resolute to show that he would have his own way, and was not to be turned from it. It is more than probable, that if there had been no opposition and no difficulties to surmount, Jasper would have been less determined to win Cherry's love, and forget the difference of rank which separated the possessor of broad lands, and the only representative of an ancient family, from the daughter of a tradesman, who had bequeathed his children, with his business, to his sister. The fruit that is out of reach on the topmost bough is always more earnestly desired than that which is attainable with no effort, and the gifts which are denied to us are always thought of greater value than those we possess. We are all like children crying for the moon, and deaf to the wisdom of those around us, who tell us the unattainable, if attained, would fail to satisfy us.

Handel at this time found that after the exertion of conducting an oratorio he needed rest. The work of composition went on more slowly, and his faithful helper and friend, Christopher Smith,

had need of patience when writing from his dictation. Handel would get up and pace the room, lamenting his blindness and pouring out his indignation on Christopher Smith, bidding him tear the sheet of music and listen as he played what he would fain have written down himself. Then he would go to the harpsichord and draw out such wonderful music that Christopher Smith, forgetting all his irritation, would throw down the pen and listen till his eyes were dim with tears, for Handel would improvise themes, which told something of the sadness and loneliness of his darkened life, and become unaware of anyone being present.

Thus, on this morning—the same on which Jasper had made an unsuccessful attempt to see Charity—the gentle opening of the door of the music room in Brook Street did not disturb him. His sightless eyes raised, his head thrown back, he sat at the instrument over which he had a magic power and played on. Mournful strains of exceeding beauty, through which ran a happier melody, gathering strength as he went on, till at last, victorious over the sadness, it burst forth in a great pean of exultation and then died away to a peace and rest which was soft and soothing, as the gentle breeze of heaven whispering in the trees at evening time. At the close, Handel still sat

at the harpsichord, and presently said in a quick voice,—

‘My good Christopher, I was hot and unjust to you anon—forgive me.’ Then suddenly—‘There is someone here. Who are here? How did they come hither?’

A little voice, like the coo of a ring-dove, answered,—

‘It is Pearl, dear master. I am come to bid you farewell. My mother has brought me to bid you farewell.’

Handel’s face was instantly illuminated with the smile that the presence of a child, and more especially the blind child, little Pearl, always kindled there.

‘My little one,’ he said, ‘come hither. It must not be *lebe wohl*; and is Signora la Contessa here?’

‘Yes, dear sir, I am here! I heard those strains of music in the hall, and I dared to enter unbidden, though the porter’s displeasure was incurred. You will grant me your pardon, for my child’s sake?’

‘Ah! and for your own, madam,’ Handel said.

‘Your music, sir,’ the Countess said, ‘told me the story of my life till the minor was lost in the final notes of joy. They are not mine yet, and,

methinks, sir, never can be, but I thank you for all your music has done for me, and for your goodness to my little Pearl.'

'Do not suffer her to sing yet, madam. She is too young, as another child I have known was too tender—Charity Treherne. Have you tidings of her?'

'I was in her chamber yesterday, sir; but, alas! she did not know me. She is lying in a state of weakness—sad! how sad to see!'

'Poor child! Poor little maiden! She has the fire of genius in her. How goes the affair with her unfortunate suitor?'

'It is held in abeyance, sir. You know, may be, that Jasper Heneage is my brother?'

'I heard as much. Well! well! bid him be considerate, and cease to force his wishes upon Charity. She is very tender, and rough winds might well lay her low. But, madam, I would fain hear your voice; you can sing—what shall it be?'

'Lascia ch'io pianga,' Margaret said.

'Ah, yes!' and then Handel played some of the music of 'Rinaldo,' leading it up to that beautiful song, which he adapted to the compass of Margaret's voice.

Little Pearl listened enraptured, and henceforth

music was to be a strong tie between mother and child.

Little Pearl's voice was raised in dulcet notes as the last sound of her mother's song died away.

'Beautiful!' she said in an ecstasy of delight.

'Yes, yes, you are right, little one. It is plain now, madam,' Handel said, 'to discover whence the child's gift comes.'

'Ah, sir,' Margaret said, 'may the gift bring her a fairer, better life than mine has been. There have been moments when I have wished I had never sung a note, and that my ear had been deaf to music.'

'Nay, nay; those have been idle wishes, surely. All the gifts God gives us must be used for His glory.'

'As you have done, sir; but such has not been my fate. We must bid you adieu now. Come, Pearl, my child.' But Pearl clung to Mr Handel, and was unwilling to leave him. 'Come, child,' her mother said, in a somewhat imperious tone, 'the coach is waiting in the street; do not delay.'

Very unwillingly Pearl obeyed her mother, allowing her to take her hand, but, hanging back, she said,—

'Good-bye, sir! I wish I might go back to

the hospital, for there I should be sure to hear your music and your voice.'

'You will hear your mother's music, child, and be happy. Go, go, and be sure I shall not forget you.'

When Christopher Smith had seen the Countess to the coach, where Assunta awaited them, he returned to the parlour.

'Strange, sir, is it not, that the child should hanker after the life at the Foundling? She looks beautiful as an angel, in some shining white stuff, and on her head a lace cap, with pale-blue ribands. The change is great from the brown stuff frock and thick linen cap of the Foundling children.'

'Ay, I daresay. Come, let us to work again, Smith; we have idled too long. Come!'

CHAPTER XVII

THE MUSIC WAKES

THERE are few experiences in life more painfully mixed than a meeting, after long years of separation, with one who has been intimately associated with us in our home life in the days that are no more.

The mother, with a pain at her heart, which only mothers know, sees her boy drift away on the sea of life, full of hope and spirit, ready to believe the future will be bright for him, and that his entire independence will be secured.

The years pass, and the boy returns no more. In his place comes a man, changed in outward appearance, and, though his heart may still be true to the old love of home, its ways, once familiar, seem strange, and he comes back to find out, perhaps for the first time, what separation means. The mother knows it and feels it, and does her best to break down the almost intangible

barrier which seems to exist between her and the son she has loved so well, and has longed to clasp once more to her heart. All may be well with him, and he may have, through long years, done his duty bravely in a distant land, but the fact remains the boy is hers no longer, and the son, in his ripened manhood, is another and not the same with him, to whom, with many tears and heartaches, she had bid God-speed years ago. The bitter and the sweet are mingled in the cup which she has prayed that she might live to taste, and, by degrees, it may be, the inevitable is accepted, and, forgetting the past, she is thankful for the present.

It was fourteen years since Margaret Heneage had passed along the lime avenue which led to her home. She left Pearl with Assunta in the coach, at the lodge, saying,—

‘I will return for you. Wait here till I come or send for you.’

Pearl was asleep, with Assunta’s arm around her, and she did not take any notice of her mother’s departure.

Assunta held up a brown hand, and saying,—

‘Si, si, la piccolina dorme, signora.’

The coach door was opened and closed, and Margaret was stepping quickly on under the almost

naked boughs of the limes. She slackened her pace as the front of the house came in sight. It looked dull and grey in the mist of the November evening. A few drops of rain fell, and now and again a sere leaf fluttered silently to the ground as the wind sighed through the branches.

She had passed along that road for the last time on a spring day when her youth responded to the joyousness of everything around her. It was before her voice had been heard in London society, before her beauty and charm had been felt by many, and by the man who had so cruelly deceived her.

‘Fourteen years!’ she said. ‘It is more like a hundred, so far, far off seems that spring day. This dreary wintry afternoon is the reality, that spring day the dream. All life is a dream, nothing is lasting or real except my mother’s love. I will trust to Godfrey—he says it is as strong as it ever was—that I need not fear—but I *do* fear. I do dread to see my mother. Oh, to go back to the old time when I rode on Jet and led a life as free and happy as a bird. Ah, me! no tears can wash out the memory of wrong-doing, nothing can restore me to innocence and peace.’

Then, as she went slowly onwards, her lips involuntarily repeated a quaint verse which she had found in an old book in the library years before,

and had learned without any real sense of its meaning; it had a very real meaning now.

It is a good and soothfast saw,
Half-roasted never can be raw.
No dough is turned again to meal,
No crock new shapen on the wheel.
You can't turn curds to milk again,
Nor Now, by wishing, into Then;
And, having tasted stolen honey,
You can't buy innocence for money.

A large wood fire was blazing in the winter parlour. The shutters were not closed, and the bright light, seen in the gloom of all around, seemed to give Margaret fresh spirit. She quickened her pace, all unaware that the eyes of love which had watched for her home-coming for so many years were upon her now.

Yes, that was Margaret's step—that graceful figure, however hidden in its outline by the long, black cloak, could be none other than hers.

When Margaret rang the bell, the clanking sound had not ceased before the heavy oak door was thrown open—long before Watson could reach it—and with a cry of 'Margaret,' the wanderer was clasped to her mother's arms.

'*Mother*, I am come home.'

And then, in silence, the two who had been so long parted, passed, hand linked in hand, through

the hall to the door leading to the distant wing, where the fire was burning in the winter parlour.

Watson respectfully stood aside, waiting for the recognition he longed for.

‘Ah! Watson,’ Margaret said, holding out her hand to him. ‘Mother, may Watson send a message to the lodge gate? My child is waiting there.’

‘I’ll run right off, madam,’ Watson said, and he jogged away, brushing a tear from his eye as he said,—

‘Bless her, I’d know her voice amongst a thousand.’

‘You know about Pearl, mother—my blind child?’

‘Yes, dear one, yes.’

‘Sir Godfrey told you of her and—and my story?’

‘Yes.’

‘You will not wish me to tell it over again—to give you pain, mother?’

‘No, not till you would have me hear it.’

‘I have had my punishment, mother, in divers ways, but the worst was when my blind child turned from me and chilled my heart. *You* will understand.’

‘Yes, I understand too well,’ was the answer.

‘I sang to her to-day “*Lascia ch’io pianga*,” and I think it has brought her nearer to me. You will try to love her, mother, for my sake. ‘I have been torn with doubts and fears as to how you

would receive *her*. Set them at rest, mother; let not the innocent suffer for the guilty.'

'All shall be as you wish, my dear one.'

And now Margaret had let her cloak drop off, and stood before her mother in all her matured beauty. The girl of seventeen, with all the charm of youth, was not more beautiful than the woman. It was a chastened loveliness, with a tenderness in the lines of her mouth and a light in her eyes which had not been there when she left her home. Her mother gazed at her as if she could never turn away.

'Ah! Margaret, Margaret, why did you not come to me when deserted?'

She knelt down and buried her head on her mother's knees.

'I was afraid to disgrace you,' she said; 'I dreaded to bring disgrace on my father's name. I was in a sore strait, but God did not forsake me; your prayers must have been heard, for I knew you prayed for me.'

'Night and day—night and day,' was the answer, as the mother's hands gently rested on the bowed head. 'Night and day, with tears and sorest distress. It is over now, and God has been merciful. My child has come back to me; let us thank Him with our whole hearts.'

And now the sound of wheels was heard.

‘It is Pearl!’ Margaret said. ‘I must go and bring her to you, mother.’

She started up, and went to the hall, where Mrs Watson and several of the old servants were gathered, for the news had spread that the long-lost daughter of the house had come home.

Assunta now appeared, her bright red and gold handkerchief wound round her raven hair, as only an Italian woman knows how to wear it—heavy long gold earrings hanging on either side of her brown neck.

‘*La piccolina dorme, signora. Ohime! svegliarsi,*’ and Assunta set down her burden in the hall.

Pearl uttered a little faint cry.

‘I want Goody! Where am I?’

‘Here, my precious child, with thy mother,’ and one of those pangs of jealous love shot through the mother’s heart, as she heard the child’s first cry on awakening was not for her but for the matron at the Foundling.

Mrs Heneage had followed her daughter, and now was ready to receive her grandchild.

Assunta took off the cloak in which Pearl had been wrapped, and she stood by her mother’s side all in white, her sightless eyes raised as was

their wont, as if seeking for something above and beyond this world. No wonder Mrs Watson murmured 'Little angel.'

The household had all assembled; most of the servants were the long-tried friends of years, who had known the beautiful lady, who had come home, in her youth, and had mourned her absence.

Mrs Heneage now came forward, and taking little Pearl's hand in hers, she bent and kissed her sweet face. Then she turned to her servants.

'My good friends,' she said in her clear, musical voice, 'my daughter, the Countess Pergolesi, has returned to England a widow. I ask you all to serve her and her little daughter well, and I feel sure I shall not ask in vain.'

'No, indeed, madam! nought that you ask is in vain.'

It was Mrs Watson who was spokeswoman for the rest.

'Pretty dear, she is an angel, I declare, and what eyes!'

'Sightless eyes,' her mother said, with a ring of sadness in her voice. 'My child is blind, and will the more need your kindness and care.'

'And she shall have it, bless her heart! that you may rely on, Miss Margaret. Lor'! I ought to say

my lady ; you'll excuse me, for I shall never teach my tongue that grand name of yours.'

Assunta stood apart, looking on the scene with her large, dark eyes. She was conscious that she was an alien amongst these English servants, and pulling her mistress's sleeve she said,—

'Dove voglia che ando, signora.'

Ah, Assunta ! I was forgetting you—forgive me.' And then turning to Mrs Watson, the Countess said,—'You will take care of Assunta, dear Watson ; she has served me faithfully for ten years.'

'That I will, my lady. All the chambers are ready ; they have been ready for you at any time. The old nursery—the oak room and—'

Margaret turned away,—'ready for her all these long years !' It was too much, and the tears, long repressed, ran down her face.

'Thank you, thank you, dear Watson ! you will be good to my little Pearl. I know you will.'

Pearl had received her grandmother's kiss and overtures of friendship as if they were hers by right. She nestled in her arms, Margaret thought, more contentedly than she had done in her mother's, and again a thrill of wounded feeling made itself felt. 'She will never, never love me as I love her,' she thought. 'It is my punishment,

and her grandmother will have the love for which I hunger—alas! alas! the love which I failed to render her. It is just; it is right.'

It was not till Pearl was in bed, and all the house was asleep that Mrs Heneage began to speak of Jasper and Charity Treherne.

'I have determined to see this young woman. I told Sir Godfrey I would do so. Jasper knows it also.' But there was a certain restraint in her mother's manner which did not fail to strike Margaret. 'When shall I send a coach for her?'

Not for many days yet, I fear. Poor Cherry is still very ill, and takes but little heed of aught around her. At the best, she is very fragile and weak, and this shock and distress of mind have overwhelmed her. Jasper was very wrong to attempt to carry her off as he did?'

'Yes,' Mrs Heneage said; 'but I believe his intentions were honourable, and Sir Godfrey is of the same mind. The question that troubles me is whether this girl really loves my son?'

'I think she does; but, dear mother, she has a sensitive and, may be, a proud spirit. She feels that you cannot forget that her birth and position are below that of Jasper, and she would not willingly enter into a family to be coldly received. Surely we might rather rejoice that Jasper should desire to

marry a pure, innocent girl, for the world is full of those who lay traps for men, and who are untrustworthy, vain and flighty. Charity is none of these. I know her well from living under the same roof with her when lonely in England. If she is too weak to come here to St Crispin's, will you go and visit her, and give her an assurance of your good will?'

'It is seldom I go into town, Margaret; I have shrunk from doing so.'

'Yes, I understand, and I *am the cause!*'

'Let us not recur to the past, dear child; it is buried now deep under a mother's love which is changeless. We will both begin afresh, and live for God and for each other, till I am called hence. St Crispin's is spacious, and Jasper and his wife can find room enough, and to spare, in the house. I shall always remain in the west wing, this side of the house, where I have passed so many lonely years.' Then turning to another subject hastily, she asked,—'You would not know Jasper?'

'No; at first he was as a stranger to me, but the old likeness is coming out now. I see something of the fair-haired boy in the man who surely looks much older than his years.'

'Ah! yes,' his mother said, 'the wild, free life

he led, till our best friend, Sir Godfrey, held out a hand to him, is not a life that keeps youth fresh and unchanged. My poor boy! Ah! Margaret, those were blissful days when you were both children; he came after his father's death, as I fondly hoped, to bless me. Enough of these remembrances. If many are changed by years, there is one who has never changed—Sir Godfrey Stuart.'

Margaret was silent.

'He was always too good for me,' she said presently. 'I should never have made him happy, and I know he feels this now; the short pain I gave him was nothing when compared with what the pain of a life-time would have been.'

'I do not think the pain you speak of is cured yet,' Mrs Heneage said quietly. 'I believe the old wound throbs still, especially when touched by careless hands.'

'What sorrow I have caused,' Margaret said. 'Ah! mother, mother! I will do all I can to atone for the past, but,' with passionate energy, 'I cannot retrieve it! Ah! me, I *cannot* recall it!'

Cherry Treherne came slowly back to life, but she seemed only to desire to lie quiet on the old sofa in the parlour, and to dislike any exertion;

even talking seemed too much effort, and as Penrose was now continually employed in the shop, she spent most of her time alone. Her violin was silent. She had no strength to raise the bow, and it lay by her side while her white fingers played idly with the strings, and her eyes had a far away, wistful look in them which made Penrose's heart ache. Mrs Blake would come and sit by her and tell anecdotes of her precious boy, and lament her husband's increasing devotion to the doctrines of Swedenborg. All this was well meant to amuse Cherry, but she took very little notice of Mrs Blake as she rambled on, and always finished up by telling her she would be the better if she roused up a bit, and even came in next door for a change.

Penrose had daily visits in the shop from Jasper Heneage, and would sometimes run up to the parlour and ask Cherry if she would see him; but she would shake her head and say,—

‘Not yet, not yet.’

Sir Godfrey Stuart also often came, and Lady King rolled up in her chariot, bringing with her some little dainty, small bottles of cordials and the like. One day, when the chariot stopped at the door, Penrose, who went out to speak to Lady King and offer her grateful thanks for her

kindness, was surprised to hear a voice from the further side of the coach say,—

‘I have a mind to visit the poor child if my lady will suffer me to pass her. Here,’ to the footman, ‘help me out, do ye hear?’

‘You cannot do it, dear sir,’ Lady King said; ‘no doubt the stairs are steep, and—’

‘I must do as I choose, my lady,’ Handel said, in a voice of decision, and Lady King knew remonstrance was useless. Handel’s portly figure nearly filled up the little shop as he passed through it, led not by the footman, but by Penrose. ‘I cannot see you,’ he said, ‘but I know your voice. You are the little one’s sister.’

‘Yes, sir, I came to your house with her three years ago. I marvel that you remember me.’

‘No voice, once heard, do I ever forget,’ Handel said; ‘it has been so through my life, and now my ears are quickened as my sight is dimmed. Softly now.’

They were at the foot of the stairs, and Penrose, dreading the effect this visit might have on her sister, said,—

‘May it please you, sir, to let me warn my sister of your coming?’ With this she tripped lightly upstairs and opening the door said in a quiet voice,—‘Mr Handel is below and would fain

see you, Cherry, or rather he would fain you should see him, poor gentleman!’

For the first time since her illness, Cherry started into an upright position.

‘Let him come, let him come,’ she said. ‘How good he is!’

And now Handel’s sonorous voice was heard calling impatiently,—

‘Here, Mistress Treherne, do not keep me waiting all day,’ and he rapped his gold-headed cane on the stairs.

Penrose was at his side in an instant.

‘She is ready, sir, and how glad I cannot tell you.’

The real tenderness of the great musician’s character was, as we know, always called out by weakness and helplessness.

‘*Mein Kindchen, mein arme Kindchen,*’ he said, ‘how fares it with you?’

‘Oh! sir, I have longed to see you. I thought mayhap you had forgotten me.’

‘Forgotten you! no, no; but,’ as he seated himself in the old oak chair where poor Miss Prudence had been wont to sit when resting from her labours in the shop, ‘you are very weak. I hear your feebleness in your voice, and your little hand is hot.’

‘Here is my dear violin, sir,’ Cherry said, ‘my silent friend. I shall never wake music from it again; I cannot even hold it.’

‘Tut, tut! you will play again in good time. Give me the silent friend, I’ll warrant I shall make him speak.’

And then was heard, in that little parlour, the softest strain of melody, as the great master awoke the music from Cherry’s violin. Charity lay back entranced, her eyes fixed on Handel, who played the music of his song which had lately been so much praised—‘Waft her, angels.’ Presently, in full, rich tones, though low and soft, he accompanied the music with the words. However strong his German accent might be in speaking, it was scarcely noticeable when singing. When the last notes had died away, Cherry said,—

‘Uplifted! uplifted! it is always so with your music, dear sir. Ah! if God had given me a voice.’

‘He has given you the power to love melody and harmony, and to bring them forth from this, the only instrument which approaches the human voice. Harken, little one, I would sooner hear a hand like yours awake the music hidden in this violin when your spirit speaks by it, than a woman singing with neither heart nor soul. Ah, I have

suffered from that oftentimes, and I fear I have raged at her.' But in a softer tone,—‘The time is past for me, poor blind Handel, to rage and swear. He has learnt better in a school, where we must all sit soon or late. Adversity and affliction are hard task-masters, but they are good. Yes, yes, very good—you will find it so, *mein Liebchen*, and now for your sister's hand to lead me away, her ladyship will be impatient. *Addio! Addio!*’ And then taking Cherry's little hand in his large palm, he stroked it gently and repeated,—‘*Addio, cara mia, addio!*’ repeating the word in tender accents as Penrose led him away.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SILENT FRIEND

FROM the day of Handel's visit, Charity Treherne seemed to revive and wake from a dreamy state of half-consciousness to a desire to return to life and all the delights which music brought her.

It was pathetic to see her first feeble attempts to draw the bow over her 'silent friend,' and Penrose would hear her talking to it as if it had perfect understanding of what she meant. But by degrees the power to wake the music came back, and the faint tones of the violin were heard like the greeting of a friend who had returned after a long absence, and was afraid to show all that he felt of joy at the meeting.

One evening, Charity, who had been playing several airs from the 'Messiah' and felt more certain of her powers, heard Penrose coming up from her daily work in the shop, saying,—

‘There is someone below who has been listening to you, dear. I think the time is come for you to see him.’

‘I do not wish to see him, if you mean Jasper Heneage.’

‘There is something to be thought of besides your wishes, Cherry,’ Penrose said, in her usual direct manner. ‘You should think of him. If you cannot return Mr Heneage’s love, you must not shilly shally; you must let him know how you stand with him. I know Speranza, as she bids me call her, thinks that you must not keep the poor gentleman in suspense any longer. He has been faithful to you, dear, for so long, though he must see many grand ladies every day.’

‘Let him take one of them in my place. There would be no trouble then. Mrs Heneage would be pleased, and she would be welcome at the grand house where I should never be truly welcome—you know it, Penrose?’

‘Nay, I do not know it, and sure you think Speranza loves you.’

‘Yes, but her mother never will.’

‘Cherry,’ Penrose said, ‘the truth is, you do not love Jasper Heneage, and you must needs say so, nor keep him dangling on, looking pitifully ill and sad. You should think of him.’ Cherry was

silent, and Penrose, lighting the lamp which hung by a chain over the fireplace, saw by its light that her sister's face was wet with tears. 'Oh! Cherry, dear one, do not grieve me. I want to see you happy, darling, and I think, now, Jasper would make you happy. Let me bring him up. I pray you, dear, to see him. It is now a month since you have been lying here—a month since Aunt Prudence died, and all this time never a day has passed but Jasper has come, bringing flowers and fruit, and he gets sadder every day.'

'Well-a-day, Penrose, as you must have my answer, I say let him come up, but he must hear the truth.'

Penrose went away quickly to call Jasper, fearing Cherry might change her mind.

'Come!' she said, as she opened the door of the little parlour behind the shop. 'Come! she will see you; but remember how feeble she still is, and that the doctor yet fears whether she will ever be the same again.'

Jasper Heneage, the young man of fashion, who had run through the gay course of the beaux of the day; who had been sought after by many, and whose society was coveted for parties to Vauxhall, for balls and routs, now felt so humbled,

that he dreaded this long-desired interview with Charity Treherne.

She had left the sofa, and seated herself in the high oak chair—a hand on either of its arms to steady herself.

Jasper came and knelt before her, his head bowed; for after one glance at Cherry's face, he felt as if he dared not look again.

Could this indeed be Cherry, the laughing Cherry, who had given him the riband in the shop below long ago? Cherry who had won the enthusiastic approval of the gay crowds when she attended routs in my Lady King's train—the favoured pet of the great musician himself?

Jasper, generally so swift of tongue with high-flown compliments and flattering words, was absolutely dumb.

'You wished to see me, sir?' Cherry said gently. 'I am yet very feeble, as you may discover; but I would fain thank you for your goodness in inquiring for my health since my illness. Nay,' she continued, as Jasper raised his head, and she saw there the marks of suffering. 'I am sorely grieved to have caused you unhappiness. I would fain have avoided it had it been possible—forgive me.'

'It is I who crave forgiveness; show it, I beseech you, by coming to my mother's house, and when

you are restored to health—as God grant it may be soon—give yourself to me, to tend and care for and worship while life lasts.’

‘It cannot be, Jasper.’ She called him by his name, but in a voice which seemed to destroy all hope. ‘It cannot be. You must look for one in your own rank, and you can easily find one.’

‘Do not madden me with these words. I swear it is you—and you alone—I love. Everything shall be made smooth for you. You shall be treated as a queen. My sister loves you—she has long loved you.’

‘Dear, sweet Speranza,’ Charity said—‘she will understand. She will know.’ Then half to herself,—‘She will not know all.’

‘Cherry, I must know—is there aught behind that keeps you back? Is it the mad attempt I made in my cursed folly to carry you off from the Foundling? Is it that you cannot pardon?’

‘I have forgiven it,’ she said softly; ‘that is past.’

‘Then what is it? Is it that you cannot love me? *Is it?*’

Cherry was silent.

‘You seemed to favour me in past years, when you were first an inmate in Lady King’s house. You certainly favoured no others before me. It

seemed that my devotion was not unacceptable. What has changed you?’

‘I am not changed,’ she said. ‘I was unversed in the ways of the world, and I was flattered and pleased that you, a grand gentleman, should care for me, the daughter of a tradesman, the niece of a tradeswoman, and now the sister of one. Yes,’ she went on as Jasper tried to interrupt her with fresh protestations, ‘yes, and I am proud to have my good, noble Penrose for a sister. Once, to my shame be it spoken, I did not greatly care to own her, when Miss O’Connor twitted me with my position, and poor O’Brien, my Lady King’s willing slave, told me she came of a noble Irish race, and that I was only one of the lower class, my spirit used to rebel, and oh! I was so mean, so wickedly mean, as to be ashamed of Penrose. Now I have only pride in her, and do you think I could endure to see her treated with disdain by your mother and all your friends? No, Jasper, I beseech you to leave me as I am. I can take up music once more and live by it. I shall be a thousand times happier than if I came to you a reluctant wife, and to be received at St Crispin’s by a proud lady, who, in her heart, would never forget the shop in Broad Street, and my sister serving customers at the counter.’

‘What can I say to move you?’ Jasper said, starting to his feet, and holding out his arms in despairing appeal. ‘What can I say? Yes, one thing I will say—you could love another man better than you could love me. Rank and title would not stand in the way then. Speak, Cherry, and say if this be not true.’

Her pale face flushed crimson, but she answered with dignity,—

‘I deny you have the right, sir, to speak thus to me or to question me. I beg you to spare me further.’

Jasper Heneage saw his case was hopeless, and turned to go.

‘You must e’en take the consequence of dismissing me,’ he said. ‘I care not what becomes of me, and you may repent at last when you hear ill tidings of me.’

Charity was greatly moved—her heart misgave her for an instant. She wavered, but only for an instant.

‘How could I do it, and be false to him and to myself?’

She went towards him and laid her hand on his arm.

‘I shall hear you are happy and good,’ she said; ‘you will bring your mother a daughter she can

love, and you will see one day that all is right and best.'

'*Never!*' he said passionately; '*never!*' and then he went down the stairs with quick, bounding steps, passed through the shop without a word to Penrose, who anxiously awaited his coming, and was gone.

We are often surprised by what seem the inconsistencies in the characters of those we think we know best.

That gentle Charity Treherne, with all her acute sensibilities, her emotional temperament, her enthusiasm for the art to which she had given herself, and with her loving, clinging nature, should have strength to resist Jasper Heneage, because she could not honestly respond to his passionate devotion, lasting as it had for years, may seem incredible and improbable. But there are many instances of a like kind; for people fail at the very point where we expect them to be strong, and are strong where we only looked for weakness and vacillation.

When Jasper was gone, Cherry stood as he had left her, questioning her own heart.

'Is it really because I am too proud to be looked down on by his mother? Is it really because I could not brook slights to be passed on Penrose?

Is there not yet another reason which can never be told? If I loved him, *if* I loved him, all else would be as nothing. I know enough to know that, and I know it to my cost.'

Cherry covered her face with her hands, and the burning blushes which they hid, as she threw herself on the couch were cooled by a flood of fast-falling tears.

It was two days later, when Charity was making the violin speak to her of sorrow and pain, ending in a brighter strain of hope and peace, that Sir Godfrey Stuart bid Penrose stop as she was showing him the way upstairs to the parlour, saying,—

'Let me listen here till she has ended.'

He stood with folded arms leaning against the balustrade at the top of the stairs, and when the last notes had died away, he tapped at the door.

There was no answer, and Sir Godfrey opened it, asking,—

'May I be permitted to enter?'

Cherry was lying back on the sofa, her violin on the floor by her side, the bow held listlessly in her hand, exhausted with the effort she had made.

'You are better, I am glad to know, Mistress Charity. I have played the eavesdropper, and

heard the long-silent friend speaking in tones not to be mistaken.'

Cherry stooped to pick up the violin, and for a moment her face was hidden. When Sir Godfrey took her hand in his and touched it with his lips, a bright smile illuminated it.

'I am rejoiced to find you able to take pleasure in music again.' Then, still standing and leaning on the back of Miss Prudence's old chair, he said, — 'I have seen Jasper Heneage to-day ; he is sorely distressed by your decision. I am, as you know, his friend and his mother's friend. You will pardon me if I ask you whether this decision is final?'

'Yes,' Charity said. 'Yes, sir, it is final.'

'Naught that I could say in his behalf would avail to influence you? If there were any hope, I would venture to tell you that Jasper has for a year past changed his whole manner of life, and I do not think any woman need fear to commit herself to his care. Dear Mistress Charity, steadfast love is a priceless possession ; only those whose hearts have been wrung by the failure of hope and the betrayal of trust, can know how priceless is a true and loyal friend. I have come to love this poor boy, and I am bold enough to plead his cause.'

While Sir Godfrey Stuart was speaking, Charity

kept her face averted from him. Now she raised her head, and looked straight into his noble face.

Sir Godfrey's bearing and manner, his fine presence, and the signs of past sorrow, seen in the downward curves round his mouth and the furrows on his square, wide brow, which the outline of the small wig he wore deepened, were all likely to appeal to the sympathy and admiration of the emotional girl before him.

Ever since she had known him, and he had extended kindness to her—a protective kindness which a man, more than double her age, might show to a daughter, as on that first night at Vauxhall—Charity had made him her hero of romance, and had loved him.

Poor child! she was hardly conscious of it herself, till, finding she was incapable of returning Jasper's love, she had questioned her own heart and found the answer there.

'I cannot, I dare not, marry Mr Heneage,' she said.

Her voice was low but firm.

'You may rest assured his mother will welcome you. I can answer for it. She is ready to receive you, and you will win her heart. No false pride need keep you back.'

‘False pride!’ she said. ‘No, it is not what you, sir, are pleased to call false pride. If I loved Mr Heneage, it would not concern me were he a duke or a prince. It would be nothing then if all the world scoffed at me, and treated me with contempt. Ah!’ she said, clasping her hands, ‘you do not understand—you do not know.’

Sir Godfrey looked down, with a keen, searching glance, upon the fair face raised to his.

‘My child,’ he said, tenderly, ‘do not make a mistake. We all have our dreams in youth. I had mine, and I had a rude awakening. If so be that you are indulging in some romantic vision, clothing some ideal hero with impossible perfection, and rejecting an honest love for a chimera, I would have you consider well before you finally dismiss that poor boy.’

‘I have considered well, sir,’ was the reply. ‘*If* you understood me, you would pity me.’

‘I do pity you now, my child, for I think you are unfitted for the buffets of the world. I have oftentimes seen you sorely tried in Lady King’s household. I have seen you pestered with the distasteful compliments of gay, worthless men. You are not fitted to stand alone; you need a staff to lean on.’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘that is true, sir, but what if it

were a broken one, which would pierce my hand as I leaned?’

Sir Godfrey was puzzled, but, finding he could not make any impression on Charity, he prepared to go.

‘What am I to say to Jasper’s mother, and to his sister, who have bid me assure you of their welcome to St Crispin’s as a daughter and sister? What am I to say?’

‘Make my dutiful respects to Mrs Heneage, and my loving ones to Speranza—the name she bid us call her when she lived unknown with us—and say I thank them for their goodness, but I cannot come to St Crispin’s, for I cannot listen to the proposals with which Mr Jasper Heneage has honoured me.’

‘So be it, then,’ Sir Godfrey said: ‘I bid you farewell, Mistress Charity, and may I add that, should you need a friend, you may command me.’

Once more he took Cherry’s little hand in his, kissed it reverently, and left her.

‘A friend!’ she exclaimed, aloud, when his footfall had died away on the stairs. ‘His friendship! Alack! it is—yes, I must say it—his love. I want, and he shall never know it, never dream that poor little Cherry would die for his sake, for love—true love—knows nought of difference

of rank or station. It breaks down barriers. It is all powerful to do so. Now what is left me, but to forget and go on my way—alone. Ah! not quite alone; I have you for my friend,' she said, taking her violin in her arms, and clasping it to her heart; 'and I have Penrose—dear, good Penrose. And I will go as soon as I am able and see my dear master, and ask him to find me a place in his orchestra, and let me hear him wake his wondrous music from harpsichord and organ, and so uplift me to seek Him, of whom he tells in the "Messiah," who is ready and willing to receive all the weary and heavy laden, if so be they will go to Him for rest.'

Then Charity lay down on the old couch and cried herself to sleep like a tired child; and there Penrose found her with the tears still hanging like dew-drops on her long lashes, and her lips parted with a smile.

'She is dreaming one of her fair dreams, dear child,' Penrose said. 'I will not awake her;' and throwing a shawl over Charity, she took her knitting and plied the needles with her accustomed diligence.

And Sir Godfrey! He went away sorrowfully. He was unwilling to confess to himself what he feared was true.

‘Poor child!’ he thought, ‘if years did not separate us, the old love which has never died would do so. There never has been but one woman in the world for me. And no fault of hers, no bitter sense of her cruelty in leaving me as she did, has ever killed that love. For how can we slay what is imperishable and eternal?’

And then Charity’s young face rose before him, as she raised it to him with a wistful yet fearless light in her eyes, as she said,—

‘If I loved him, it would be nothing if the whole world scorned me and treated me with contempt. You do not understand; you do not know.’

And Sir Godfrey said in his heart of hearts,—

‘I do understand. I do know, and I must never see her again; or, seeing her, must watch my words and ways, and even seem to be discourteous, rather than raise in her baseless hopes. But she will forget; at her age, she will forget! And I disquiet myself in vain on her account.’

CHAPTER XIX

FROM THE VANISHED PAST

1759.—‘ON such a day as this—just such a day—we went to Brook Street to petition Mr Handel for tickets for the “Messiah.” Penrose, do you remember?’

‘Ah! yes,’ Penrose said, ‘and how young we were then.’

‘I am young now, Penrose.’ Then, with a sigh, —‘Young to die.’

‘You are not going to die, Cherry. You are better, and when you get to St Crispin’s you will be well.’

Charity smiled a sweet, sad smile.

‘Nay, not well, Penrose—never well again here; but, as you say, I am better. I must have a chair and go to inquire for Mr Handel. I like to do as I have done while I can.’ Then, after a pause,— ‘Penrose, is it not strange to think that year after year, year after year, spring will come and

flowers will peep up in the hedges, and birds sing in the trees and we shall be in our graves, hid from the blessed sunshine, and forgotten—forgotten—all except great men like Mr Handel; he will never be forgotten. I fancy I hear his music sounding on and on, and listening crowds gathered to hear it, and hearts touched by it, and,' with a brighter smile, '*uplifted* by it, hundreds of years to come. Do you remember that was what I said to Mr Handel all those long years ago, and how he said he was glad, for it was what music was meant to do.'

Yes, Penrose remembered, and she remembered, too, the great master's prophetic words,—

'Have a care or the cage may be too small for the bird, and it will fly away sooner than you think.' She remembered the thrill of anxiety these words give her, and her sudden questioning,—
'What if Cherry should take to herself wings, and fly away to that world where she said music uplifted her?'

'I always think, Penrose, that I shall hear the "Hallelujah Chorus" wherever I am, and I shall have a voice *there* denied me here. I have sometimes wondered why God did not give me a voice, I should so love to sing.' Then, changing her mood suddenly as was her wont, Cherry sprang up

quickly. 'Let me have the chair, for I must, yes, I must go to Brook Street. I feel sure Mr Handel is worse. I must see him.'

'It will be too much exertion, dear ; you were so faint last time.'

'But I am better. You told me just now I was better. Penrose, let me go. I feel it may be the last time.'

Penrose yielded, not without misgivings, as she heard the short cough which followed the exertion of preparing for her departure. But the crimson spot on either cheek, and the extraordinary brilliancy of her eyes, might almost deceive even Penrose, that she was, as she said, much better.

'Would you care for me to walk by the chair, dear?' Penrose asked.

'No ; I will go alone, please. Do you mind?'

'No, no ! only if you wanted anything. See here is your fan and salt bottle, and be sure not to hurry nor be flurried, whatever tidings you may hear of Mr Handel.'

Cherry's brave spirit kept her up, and when she arrived at Handel's house, and stepped lightly into the hall, Mr Smith, who met her there, said,—

'I am right glad to find you in better health, Mistress Treherne.'

‘How fares it with the master?’

Christopher Smith shook his head.

‘He is failing quickly. I see a change day by day. He turns from his food, and he can scarce support himself at the organ, when he insists on taking the direction of the “Messiah” at Covent Garden. Nothing that I say can dissuade him. He was ever, as you know, immovable, when his mind was set on doing aught.’

‘May I be allowed to see him? I will take care not to agitate him.’

‘Oh, yes! you can see him. He was speaking of you yesterday, and wondering if you were less troubled with the cough. Lady King must not see him again. She gave way to weeping and crying, and this disturbed the master.’

‘I will neither weep nor cry—you may trust me,’ Charity said.

When Christopher Smith opened the door of the parlour, Handel was seated in his accustomed chair, but he made no sign that he was aware of his presence. His sightless eyes were open, and he was lost in one of those reveries during which his most beautiful conceptions took shape.

Christopher Smith went up to him, saying,—

‘You will be glad to learn, sir, that Mistress



HANDEL'S HOUSE IN BROOK STREET.

Charity Treherne is in better health, and has come to see you.'

'Ah! come hither, my child. Nay; no coughing—no coughing. Here, sit on the stool, your favourite seat. My Pearl was here t'other day; she is singing like an angel, but needs instruction. Her mother shrinks from letting a master teach her. She is jealous over her, and scarce lets her out of sight. Ah, well, she has a reason, doubtless.'

'Tell me of yourself, dear master.'

'What shall I tell you? I am going fast. I feel it, I know it; but, child, I am, through the mercy of God, ready, aye ready. My earthly affairs are in order, my will made, and my adieux all but said. The last performance of the "Messiah" to-morrow evening, will be my last, and then—Lo! I am in God's hands, and He will deal well with me. You will be at Covent Garden, little one.'

'They fear the night air for me, sir, but I will try to gain Penrose to consent, and, if close shut in a chair, sure it will not harm me.'

'Do nothing rashly, my child. This cough tells its own tale.'

'I know it, sir; but, like you, I feel the end may not be far.'

'That is well; it is but cowardice to fear death,

for in Christ shall all be made alive. I was dreaming, when you came, of past years. It is amazing how clear all things rise up before me. I am little George Frederick again in the garret of our old home at Halle, under the stork's nest, for I used to hear them chattering and the young ones piping. I am again stealing with bare feet up the rickety stairs in fear lest I should be heard, and when once in this place of refuge, I used to make what music I could from the old harpsichord. Then I see my mother, my blessed mother, coming in with a light, and my father following, commanding me to stop, for I had no right to be making that noise. Noise! when I thought, when I *knew* it was a harmony of sound and a melody coming to my ears on the wings of the night wind whispering over the roof, and bringing the sweets of the country to the town. Ah, well! ah, well! My blessed mother taught me obedience, and I did as my father bade me, and suffered my mother to carry me to bed. I fancy I feel her arms round me now, and hear her gentle voice saying,—“George, my son, thy Father in Heaven wills that thou shouldst be obedient to thy father on earth.” She was right, that good mother of mine. Ah! her teaching has come back to me, her son, many a time, and my hot

tempers and evil words have been cooled and stopped for her sake. Her poor, blind, old son! I make no doubt she loves him still, and often, when the music of my oratorios is rising on wings heavenward, I fancy she is hearkening from her high place, and is glad.'

He went on for some time in the same strain, now and again scarcely conscious of Charity's presence, then, suddenly taking one of her hands in his, he would stroke it softly, saying,—

'Dear little one, dear little one, thou hast a soul akin to mine, for music is thy second nature. I have never forgot thy first coming. I discovered then what was in thee, and thou hadst the real love for music, and knew what it did for thee, which thousands never know. Uplifted, uplifted—yes, yes—at times to the very courts of Heaven.'

Christopher Smith, who had left the master and Charity together, had now returned, afraid that the interview might have been too much for the master, and that he would suffer for it afterwards. He need not have been afraid. Handel's face was serene, and wore a satisfied, contented expression; and this, the last time that Charity ever looked on it, left a blissful memory behind. The ship which had been tossed on stormy seas was near—

ing the haven; the warrior had laid down his arms, and was at rest. The eager, impetuous spirit had heard Christ's voice, and there was a great calm. With simple faith the blind musician awaited the summons to another life, where, in the clear shining of the eternal day, his soul would enter into everlasting felicity, through the mercy of God in Christ.

'Penrose,' Charity said on her return, 'I must e'en hear the "Messiah" at Covent Garden to-morrow evening. It will be for the last time.'

'It will be a risk, dear Cherry; give up such a thought. I dare not let you go.'

'Penrose, if I am to live but a short time, one week or one day can scarce matter.'

'Ah! Cherry, Cherry, think of me left desolate,' Penrose said, with sudden emotion. 'Think of me desolate, without you.'

'Dear Penrose,' was all Cherry could say, 'let us be cheerful and like our old selves. I will not grieve you; I will give up the "Messiah." I have looked my last on the dear master, and I must see and hear him no more.'

'You will go to St Crispin's and get well; and then, when you come back—then we will go together

to hear music, and maybe you will be playing again in the orchestra.'

'Maybe!' Cherry said aloud; but to herself she murmured, '*Never!*'

The performance of the 'Messiah' at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 6th of April, 1759, was attended by a large and fashionable audience. There were rumours that Handel, who had failed so visibly in health and strength of late, would not be able to appear. But when he was led on the stage by Christopher Smith, a burst of applause rang through the building and was repeated again and again.

With faltering steps and evident emotion, Handel now came forward and bowed, and then gave the signal for the overture to be played.

'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' was sung by the leading soprano of the day, and those who watched Handel's face noticed that it was shining with a light of hope and faith. His sightless eyes were raised, and it almost seemed as if they had pierced the dividing veil, and that his ears had caught the echo of the heavenly host, as they repeated the great Amen of the chorus which so fitly closes this his greatest work.

Pearl, seated by her mother, her hands clasped, her sweet face kindling with emotion, had the

same ethereal look upon it which it had worn when she stood up amongst the children of the Foundling Hospital, and her voice first attracted Handel's notice. Her mother but seldom brought her into London, and the retirement of St Crispin's and her devotion to her grandmother seemed to satisfy Pearl. But during what was then called the oratorio season, the Countess had taken the rooms in Brook Street, near Handel, that she might give her child the delight of being with the friend who had never forgotten her, and who, from the sympathy of a like affliction had always a tender affection for the blind child. She was now a slight, fair girl of eighteen, and the simplicity and innocence of her childhood had not left her. She asked no questions as to why she had spent twelve years in the hospital—was satisfied to know that when she had been taken there her mother had not the power to keep her, and that, as soon as she had the power, she had come for her and taken her to her heart. Childlike and trusting, there were no regrets and no reproaches. Indeed, she would often say she was very happy there, and talk over the past with her faithful Marjory, who had been, at her request, brought to St Crispin's, and trained to be her maid.

The teaching of the blind was very imperfect a

hundred years ago, but Pearl had music always at her command, and in a room at St Crispin's there were harpsichords and violins and a harp, upon which she soon became a proficient.

Pearl lived in her own world and was content.

'Mother, tell me, tell me,' she said, 'how does the dear master look?'

The buzz of conversation had begun, and the gay throng were leaving the theatre.

'Ill and worn, dear child; they are leading him away. He can scarce walk.'

'Will you take me to see him, mother, now—at once? Oh! I pray you, mother, do let me go to him.'

Her mother yielded, but on calling at Handel's door on their return from the theatre, a doctor came to the carriage to say,—

'Mr Handel is in a state of dangerous exhaustion. He is put to bed, and no one can see him.'

Then Christopher Smith came hurriedly up, saying,—

'He swooned on getting home, madam. He is himself now, and by to-morrow, I doubt not, he will be ready to receive you.'

Pearl had to rest satisfied, but her mother heard her talking and singing low to herself during the night and, listening intently, heard her murmuring,—

‘I know, I know, that my Redeemer liveth;’ and again, ‘Even so, even so, in Christ shall all be made alive.’

The next day Handel was perfectly aware that he was dying, and was engaged with the lawyers adding a last codicil to his will. There was no sign of any decay of mental powers to the last, but the body which held that brave, eager spirit, was getting weaker and weaker every hour.

The summons came for Pearl to bid him farewell two days after the ‘Messiah’ had been performed at Covent Garden. Her mother led her to the room where Handel lay propped up with pillows.

‘Is that my little Pearl?’ he said faintly. ‘Come hither, child. We cannot see each other now; but it may be, it will be, all light in the next life for you and me.’

Pearl did not cry or show any signs of emotion. She went to the bedside and feeling for his hand kissed it, saying,—

‘Dear master, fare you well. You will soon hear the angels’ voices and heavenly music, and I shall come one day, and you will hear my voice, maybe, as you heard it when I was a little child.’

‘Yes, yes. I should know it amongst a thousand,

good little Pearl. It is all over now for earth, Pearl, and I shall never hear my own music again.'

'But you will hear the music in Heaven, dear master, and you leave music on earth to sound on and on for hundreds of years, and you have left love for you and gratitude in many children's hearts. They will go on blessing you, their friend, their best friend, for you have helped to give the homeless a home.'

'Ah! will it be so? I would fain hope it, but—but the dead are soon forgot, little Pearl.'

'Not when their works live after them, dear master.'

Handel lay very still after this; a smile lighted his face and he murmured,—

'God is merciful; I can trust Him.' Then he put his hand on Pearl's sunny hair as she knelt by him, and said, 'God bless little Pearl. Adieu.'

So they left him. He departed in peace, on Good Friday, trusting in the merits of Him who, on that day, suffered for our sins, dying unto sin once, and living unto God, and on the third rose again. Old and blind, after a life of many changes, many struggles, and much contention, he passed through the dark valley as one to whom the glorious

words, which he had set to music, were no fiction but a great reality :—

‘ Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream.’

It was but natural that the governors of the Foundling Hospital, to which he had been so great a benefactor, should wish to have his body buried in a vault near the founder; but with one consent the nation claimed that he should rest in Westminster Abbey with the noble and the great of past ages.

A vast concourse of people collected at his funeral, and his desire to be buried privately could not be granted. As so often happens, the death of a man quickens respect and admiration, and those who have been slow to grant them to him in life are amongst the most eager to show them when he whom they praise can no longer be affected by flattery or blame.

The beautiful anthem composed for the funeral of Handel's devoted friend, Queen Caroline, often sounds in the Abbey where he lies in Poets' Corner, with those whose names are held in reverence by Englishmen. And many sorrowful hearts have been touched by the music to which

the words are set,—‘When the eye saw her, then it blessed her.’

The blind child’s prophecy is fulfilled, for Handel’s works have long outlived him; and amid all the changes of taste and opinion which have affected music as well as other of the arts and sciences, Handel has never lost his hold on the people, and in the simple majesty of his greatest compositions, many a weary and yearning soul has found consolation and peace.

CHAPTER XXI

RENUNCIATION

A JULY day of exceptional loveliness, when the windows at St Crispin's Manor were all thrown wide open, and from one of the spacious rooms, once desolate and deserted, strains of music floated on the air, and reached the ears of a man who was pacing the terrace, making him pause to listen. Stopping before the large French window, Sir Godfrey Stuart had a view of those who were in the room.

Mrs Heneage was in her favourite chair, her eyes fastened on the performers, and a light of chastened happiness in her still beautiful face. In spite of cares and sorrows, time had dealt more gently with her than with her daughter, who was seated at the new harpsichord lately given to Pearl. Signora Pergolesi played the accompaniment of Handel's celebrated song, 'Waft her, angels, to the skies.'

Pearl's voice, as she stood by her mother's side rose in softest, sweetest cadence; and from a violin there came a strain in perfect harmony with the voice, never overpowering it, but following it with the most delicate precision and entire sympathy.

Charity Treherne had been brought to St Crispin's in the spring soon after Handel's death with very little hope that she would live. But the loving care of Mrs Heneage and her daughter, and the delicious repose of the country, had averted the progress of the disease which had seemed, at one time, too far advanced to be arrested. Everything conspired to help her recovery, and life was sweet to Cherry. Hope was strong in her heart, and all fears as to her welcome at St Crispin's were at rest. Mrs Heneage seemed as if she could not do too much to atone for years of coldness; and she had often secret regrets that she had thrown any obstacles in the way of her son's marriage.

Jasper, as was only likely, had at last consoled himself, and he was now making the grand tour with his wife, the *protégée* of Lady King, the merry Irish girl, Geraldine de Courcy, with whom his mother had to confess she had little in common, though she was the grandchild of an Irish peer,

and, in the matter of rank, a suitable match for the possessor of St Crispin's.

When the music was over, Mrs Heneage rose, and going to Charity, said,—

‘Do not play any more, my child; remember you must not tax your strength too much.’

‘It is such a joy to me to be able to play. I thought I should never draw the bow across the strings again.’ Then, looking up at Mrs Heneage, she said,—‘You have brought me back to life, and I am so *glad*, I did not want to die.’ This was said with the perfect simplicity which always characterised Cherry. ‘I am so glad to be here,’ she went on, as Mrs Heneage, drawing her hand through her arm, stepped out on the terrace.

‘Her shawl, mother,’ Margaret said. ‘She must have a shawl.’

Sir Godfrey Stuart took one from a chair and threw it round Charity, but without speaking. He stood watching the two figures as they walked slowly along the terrace, and then with a sigh he was turning away, when Margaret laid her hand on his arm.

‘Godfrey,’ she said, ‘I have something I want to say to you. Will you take it amiss?’

‘I could hardly take aught amiss from you, Margaret.’

Pearl had begun to play a soft, low melody, on the harpsichord, and the voices by the open window did not disturb her.

‘You have asked me, Godfrey, to go back to the old days again and again. I have told you that I cannot do it. It is impossible. The rest of my life must be devoted absolutely to my mother and my child—my innocent child, who suffered for my sin.’

‘Why go over the past, Margaret? Let it be buried; let it never be mentioned. I am content to be your friend.’

‘Ah! the past may never be mentioned, but it can never be forgotten by me. But this is wide of the mark. This is not what I would say to you. I have still, as you know, possession of the Casa Pergolesi at Florence. I would have you occupy it—and not alone. There is one to whom the sunny skies of Italy and its balmy breath would be life-giving. The last physician to whom my mother took her said so. Take her there. You must know what I mean. That dear child is ready to love you. Why, think you, has she turned a deaf ear to many suitors, of whom her sister has told me? Why, in the honesty of her heart, did she turn from my brother Jasper? Ask your own heart *why*?’ Then, afraid of having gone too far, she

turned quickly into the room again, and putting her arms round Pearl, she said,—‘Darling, come out now, you have had music enough for to-day.’

‘I never have enough of music, *madre mia*; it is everything to me.’

‘More than I am?’ her mother said quickly.

‘No, no, not more than grannie and you—how could it be? But it is that I love music so well that I love you so much.’

They went out together—mother and child. The limes perfumed the air, the ring-doves cooed in the fir grove behind the house.

‘It is so beautiful to be alive, mother,’ Pearl said, ‘and to hear the music of God’s world. Hearken! There are so many lovely voices. Don’t you hear them? I know the sky is blue to-day,’ and the sightless eyes were raised as if she really saw the blue canopy overhead. ‘I am sure Mr Handel often saw beautiful things, though, like me, he was blind. Something told him and tells me how lovely is God’s world, and then his music shows it to us and to all who have ears to hear.’

‘You are very happy, my child.’

‘Happy! Oh! yes, yes. How could I be happier? God has given me so many things, that I don’t

grieve because I am blind. Sometimes, at first, I did wish I could see my mother's face, but I know what she is like — beautiful as the angels in my dreams, and as good.'

'No, Pearl, no,' and the mother sighed heavily.

'Why do you sigh, *madre mia*? You are good and beautiful; grannie says so.'

A wave of self-reproach swept over Margaret, and she exclaimed,—

'It is grandmother who is good and beautiful, my child, and I must try to be like her. Ah! here she comes with Cherry;' and then Pearl was led away by her grandmother, and Margaret was left alone with Cherry.

'Oh! Speranza,' Charity exclaimed that evening, 'I have such wonderful news for you. Can it be possible that he, so good and noble, and so far above me, should love me? He says he loves me. He asks me to be his wife, and he will take me to Italy—to Italy, where everything is beautiful, and where music is in the very air. Speranza, speak to me—tell me you are glad?'

Then Charity, folded in Margaret's arms, heard her whisper,—

'I am glad; I am thankful—you will make him happy, Cherry, happier than he has ever been.'

Cherry lifted her head from Margaret's shoulder, and feeling her tears upon her face, said,—

‘Why do you cry? Are they tears of joy. Speranza, Speranza?’

‘They are tears of thankfulness, my sweet one. God grant your life may be bright and happy with the best of men.’

‘Oh!’ Cherry said, ‘if it is only a short life, it will now be a beautiful one, for, Speranza, I dared not tell *him*, but I will tell *you*. I have loved him always, always—and none but him. I asked him what he thought the grand folks would say when they knew he was going to marry me, the child of a tradesman, who made a living, till she fell ill, by music. And he said he did not care what anyone said except you and Mrs Heneage, and he knew you would be glad. I said I wanted Penrose, and he says he will go and bid her come to Italy with us. I feel as if my heart was too full of joy to do aught but make my violin tell what it is;’ and taking the violin in her hand, she played an impromptu, which was indeed the outcome of all she felt, for which no words could be found, and the voice of the violin pure and sweet, rose and fell on the summer air and seemed as a message of peace to Margaret's heart. ‘I have longed—how I have longed—for

many years to make amends, to see those happy - whom I once made miserable, and now, now the longing is satisfied, and I thank God.'

It all fell out as those principally concerned desired. We may imagine it was a nine days' wonder in select circles, when it was known that Sir Godfrey Stuart was to marry Charity Treherne. No doubt, at card-tables and tea-tables, the whole matter was threshed out, and looked at from every possible point of view, by the gossips or the day. But we may imagine, too, that the happiness of Charity and Penrose, and of Sir Godfrey Stuart, was not materially affected by either scorn or approval.

Perhaps the heart that beat with the truest satisfaction was that of the faithful sister who had loved Charity through all the changes and chances of many years, and now reaped a rich harvest for the patience and gentle forbearance which had always been her chief characteristic. Penrose was one of those whose greatest happiness consists in seeing the happiness of those they love; and this purest and most unselfish of joys was, we may believe, given her.

Let this story close with the last recorded words of that master of musicians, who has been the chief figure in it. Dr Burney tells us that for several

days before his death he expressed the wish that he might breathe his last on Good Friday, 'in hope,' he said, 'of meeting his good God, his sweet Lord and Saviour, on the day of His resurrection.' When we think of the close of Handel's life, the words of Abt Vogler, in Browning's poem, seem to express what we feel about him :—

'Why rushed the discords in? but that harmony should be prized.

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe,
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear ;
The rest may reason and welcome—'tis we musicians know.'

THE END

WORKS by MRS MARSHALL

A Series of Historical Stories, with Illustrations

In Cloth Boards, large crown 8vo, price 5s.

KENSINGTON PALACE: IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN
MARY II. Second Edition.

PENSHURST CASTLE: IN THE TIME OF SIR
PHILIP SIDNEY. Fourth Thousand.

IN THE SERVICE OF RACHEL, LADY RUSSELL.
Fourth Thousand.

WINIFREDE'S JOURNAL. A Story of Exeter and
Norwich in the days of Bishop Hall. Fourth Thousand.

WINCHESTER MEADS IN THE DAYS OF BISHOP
KEN. Sixth Thousand.

UNDER SALISBURY SPIRE: IN THE DAYS OF
GEORGE HERBERT. Ninth Thousand.

IN THE CITY OF FLOWERS. Third Thousand.

ON THE BANKS OF THE OUSE. A Tale of the
Times of Newton and Cowper. Fourth Thousand.

IN FOUR REIGNS. The Recollections of ALTHEA
ALLINGHAM. Fifth Thousand.

UNDER THE MENDIPS. Sixth Thousand.

IN THE EAST COUNTRY with Sir Thomas Browne,
Knight. Fifth Thousand.

IN COLSTON'S DAYS. A Story of Old Bristol. Fifth
Thousand.

LIFE'S AFTERMATH. A Story of a Quiet People.
With Illustrations. Thirteenth Thousand.

JOANNA'S INHERITANCE. A Story of Young Lives.
Fifth Thousand.

DAME ALICIA CHAMBERLAYNE. Memories of
Troublous Times. Fourth Thousand.

CONSTANTIA CAREW. An Autobiography.

THE MISTRESS OF TAYNE COURT. Illustrated.
Fourth Thousand.

MRS WILLOUGHBY'S OCTAVE. A Tale. Third
Thousand.

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

A NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION OF
Mrs Marshall's Earlier Works

Price 3s. 6d., cloth

EDWARD'S WIFE.
VIOLET DOUGLAS.
CHRISTABEL KINGSCOTE.
HELEN'S DIARY.
BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
NOWADAYS.
MRS MAINWARING'S JOURNAL.
LADY ALICE.
HEIGHTS AND VALLEYS.
DOROTHY'S DAUGHTERS.
MILLICENT LEGH.

Mrs Marshall's Shilling Series

Price 1s. 6d., cloth. 1s. sewed.

THE TOWER ON THE CLIFF.
THE TWO SWORDS.
BRISTOL DIAMONDS.
HER SEASON IN BATH.
THE OLD GATEWAY.
UP AND DOWN THE PANTILES.
CHRIS AND TINA
A ROMANCE OF THE UNDERCLIFF.
BRISTOL BELLS.

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

Tales by Miss Winchester

A DOUBLE CHERRY. A Story. With Illustrations.
Price 5s.

'Has written no more successful story.'—*Scotsman*.

ADRIFT IN A GREAT CITY. A Story. With Illustrations by JACOMB HOOD. Price 5s.

'One of Miss Winchester's pleasantly written tales. . . . In its descriptions of slum life in Liverpool it is equal to any of her previous efforts.'—*Daily Telegraph*.

PEARL OF THE SEA. *Third Thousand*. Price 5s., cloth.

'A charming conception.'—*Saturday Review*.

A CRIPPLED ROBIN. *Fourth Edition*. Price 5s., cloth.

'A pretty story, and there is fun as well as feeling in many of the chapters.'—*Times*.

A CITY VIOLET. *Fifth Edition*. Price 5s., cloth.

'Miss Winchester, whose power of delineating character is giving her an honourable place among the writers of serious fiction, has never done anything better than this.'—*Spectator*.

A NEST OF SPARROWS. *Ninth Edition*. Price 5s., cloth.

'Miss Winchester not only writes with skill, but writes from the heart, and with full knowledge of her subject. Her story is most genuine, pathetic, without being sad.'—*Fall Mall Gazette*.

UNDER THE SHIELD. A Tale. *Seventh Edition*.
Price 5s., cloth.

'We wish all religious stories were written in the same simple and natural way. We can conceive no more healthy reading for children.'—*Academy*.

'We welcome with real pleasure another book by the author of "A Nest of Sparrows." "Under the Shield" is to be noted for its purity of tone and high aspirations. . . . There is true fun in the book, too.'—*Athenæum*.

THE CABIN ON THE BEACH. A Tale. *Fourth Edition*. Price 5s., cloth.

'This tender story cannot fail to charm and delight the young.'—*Guardian*.

THE WAYSIDE SNOWDROP. A Tale. *Fourth Edition*.
Price 3s. 6d., cloth.

'A bright flower indeed. With all her tenderness and grace, Miss Winchester narrates one of those pathetic stories of a poor London waif that at once arouse the loving sympathy of children.'—*Guardian*.

CHIRPS FOR THE CHICKS. With Thirty-one Illustrations. Price 2s. 6d., cloth.

'The merriest, most amusing, and infinitely the most rhythmical book of poetry for young people produced this season. . . . Others besides children may read the "Chirps" with pleasure and amusement. The illustrations are very happy.'—*Standard*.

'The book is worthy to be a nursery favourite.'—*Guardian*

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

THE PORTFOLIO

ARTISTIC MONOGRAPHS. Price 2s. 6d. nett
MONTHLY

1894.

REMBRANDT'S ETCHINGS. By P. G. HAMERTON.

MALTA AND THE KNIGHTS HOSPITALLERS.
By W. K. R. BEDFORD.

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, MASTER POTTER.
By A. H. CHURCH.

BASTIEN LEPAGE. By JULIA CARTWRIGHT.

D. G. ROSSETTI. By F. G. STEPHENS.

FREDERICK WALKER. By CLAUDE PHILLIPS.

FAIR WOMAN. By WILLIAM SHARP.

THE NEW FOREST. By C. J. CORNISH.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH. By WALTER ARMSTRONG.

BOOKBINDING IN FRANCE. By W. Y. FLETCHER.

ALBERT DÜRER. By LIONEL CUST.

ITALIAN BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE
FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES.
By ALFRED W. POLLARD.

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

THE PORTFOLIO

ARTISTIC MONOGRAPHS. Price 2s. 6d. nett

MONTHLY

Each number consists of about 80 pp. of letterpress, and is complete in itself. The illustrations are generally made of four copper-plates and twenty illustrations in the text.

1895.

THE EARLY WORK OF RAPHAEL. By JULIA
CARTWRIGHT.

W. Q. ORCHARDSON. By WALTER ARM-
STRONG.

CLAUDE LORRAIN. By GEORGE GRAHAME.

WHITEHALL. By W. J. LOFTIE.

JAPANESE WOOD ENGRAVINGS. By WILLIAM
ANDERSON.

ANTOINE WATTEAU. By CLAUDE PHILLIPS.

THE ISLE OF WIGHT. By C. J. CORNISH.

RAPHAEL IN ROME. By JULIA CARTWRIGHT.

DUTCH ETCHERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY. By LAURENCE BINYON.

WILLIAM BLAKE. By RICHARD GARNETT.

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

EVENTS OF OUR OWN TIME

A Series of Volumes on the most Important Events of the last Half Century, each containing 300 pages or more, in large 8vo, with Plans, Portraits, or other Illustrations, to be issued at intervals, cloth, price 5s.

Large paper copies (250 only) with Proofs of the Plates, cloth, 10s. 6d.

THE LIBERATION OF ITALY. By the Countess MARTINENGO CESARESCO With Portraits on Copper. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

THE WAR IN THE CRIMEA. By General Sir EDWARD HAMLEY, K.C.B. With Five Maps and Plans, and Four Portraits on Copper. Fifth Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

THE INDIAN MUTINY OF 1857. By Colonel MALLESON, C.S.I. With Three Plans, and Four Portraits on Copper. Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

THE AFGHAN WARS OF 1839-1842 AND 1878-80. By ARCHIBALD FORBES. With Five Maps and Plans, and Four Portraits on Copper. Second Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

THE REFOUNDING OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE. By Colonel MALLESON, C.S.I. With Five Maps and Plans, and Four Portraits on Copper. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

*ACHIEVEMENTS IN ENGINEERING DURING THE LAST HALF CENTURY. By Professor VERNON HARCOURT. With many Illustrations. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

*THE DEVELOPMENT OF NAVIES DURING THE LAST HALF CENTURY. By Captain EARDLEY WILMOT, R.N. With Illustration and Plans. Crown 8vo. Price 5s., cloth.

*Of Volumes so * marked there are no Large Paper Editions.*

LONDON: SEELEY & CO., LIMITED, ESSEX ST., STRAND.

